



SPECIAL EVENT ANNUAL REPORT 2021



Photo: Kimeck Imagery



Photo: Gerald Jacobal



Photo: Mark Lanes



Photo: Tom Snyder





Photo: Mark Lanes

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Thank you to the DuPage Camera Club for their volunteer efforts in 2021 capturing amazing moments at our special events.

Photos in this report are a combination of staff photography as well as those from our wonderful community volunteers.



Photo: Kmieciak Imagery

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



In 2021, the Special Event Team was pleased to bring a lot of our annual events back to the community. The season kicked off with the Go Fly A Kite Event in May with a special kite to commemorate the district's 100th Anniversary and then quickly rolled into the first summer concert series at Memorial Park in June through September, Independence Day events in July, Brew Fest and Shakespeare in the Park in August, and Night Run in October. The season ended on a high note with record participation at the Reindeer Run in December.

Unfortunately, the Ice-A-Palooza and Fun Run in Color, which usually occur in February and April, were not able to take place due to COVID restrictions, but both were brought back in 2022.

The summer concert series began on June 5 with an official ribbon cutting. Attendance was kept to a minimum for this event because we were still under the State of Illinois COVID-19 Phase 3 mitigations. Those mitigations eased in mid-June so we were able to increase park capacity to 1,200. Our highest attendance was 899 and our lowest 109.

July 3 Fireworks returned at Graf Park with a large crowd and an amazing fireworks display. The parade route was slightly modified on July 4 due to downtown construction, but more than 90 parade entries participated.

Wheaton Brew Fest took place in August, but unfortunately had a lower than expected attendance.

Shakespeare in the Park put on a spectacular theater performance for the community and was able to raise money for the DuPage County Historical Museum Foundation through concession sales.

Night Run was combined with October Fest for the first time and it was a huge success. The events were held in a new location at Central Athletic Complex and will take place there again in 2022.

The year ended with the Lions Club Reindeer Run. More than 1,000 runners participated in the 5K run.

The Special Event Team also stepped in and assisted the Downtown Wheaton Association with the Holiday Parade. The district planned, organized and managed the parade on the Friday after Thanksgiving. The parade featured 48 entries which included costumed characters and a visit with Santa.

The following report highlights the attendance, activities and results from the 2021 event season.



2021 AT A GLANCE

GOALS & OBJECTIVES

We always seek to make a profit to contribute to the operating budget of the park district and raise money for district business units and foundations. In addition, it is our goal to fulfill the park district mission and provide fun, recreational opportunities and new experiences to the community, increase visitorship to downtown Wheaton and provide financial support for our charitable event partners. Our goal is to host a safe and enjoyable experience for our attendees.

HIGHLIGHTS

- Memorial Park Summer Entertainment Series – 7,000+ event goers
- Alternate 4th of July parade route with viewing at Memorial Park
- Increase in Race Wheaton participation
- Combined Night Run and October Fest at Central Athletic Complex
- Record attendance and profit at Reindeer Run



MEET THE TEAM



MARKETING



Margie Wilhelmi,
Director of Marketing



Carolyn Wilkin,
Special Event
Manager



Joe Viso,
Marketing & Event
Coordinator



Rob Sperl,
Director of Planning



Nic Novak,
Superintendent of
Projects & Events



Brian Barry,
Special Event &
Sign Specialist

PARKS SERVICES

SPECIAL FACILITIES



Dan Novak,
Director of Athletics
& Special Facilities



Andy Bendy,
Director of Special
Facilities



Kim Prazak,
Assistant to Director
of Special Facilities



Mary Janik,
Finance Assistant



Randy Tucker,
Accounting
Supervisor



Martha Hernandez,
Finance Manager

FINANCE

Special acknowledgement to all of the full time and part time staff members who volunteered their time to assist with special events and concerts in Memorial Park in 2021.

Thank you to the hundreds of volunteers who are essential in ensuring the safety and coordination of our annual events.



AUXILIARY PARTNERS

CITY OF WHEATON

The special event team works closely with many departments within the City of Wheaton, including Police, Fire, Public Works, Planning, Communications, City Council, and the City's Liquor Commission to ensure all proper permitting and safety measures are followed. The team would like to thank the City of Wheaton for its partnership in permitting and approval, operational planning and event support.



MILTON TOWNSHIP DUPAGE COUNTY C.E.R.T.

The Community Emergency Response Team (C.E.R.T.) provides assistance with security and emergency management at our larger events. This partnership has been vital in keeping our events successful and safe for our attendees, vendors and volunteers. C.E.R.T. educates people about disaster preparedness for hazards that may impact the area and trains them in basic emergency response skills.

DUPAGE COUNTY FAIRGROUNDS

The DuPage County Fairgrounds has been a great partner, offering the district use of its parking lots for Go Fly a Kite and the Fireworks on the 3rd of July. The staff at the Fairgrounds is amenable to cleaning before our events, which assists with the large volume of residents parking in the area, and ensures safety during firework setup and launch taking place on its property.



GO FLY A KITE

MAY 1 | 10A-12P | GRAF PARK

EVENT SUMMARY

Originating in April of 2009 as part of the City of Wheaton's celebration of its sesquicentennial, this free event has continued on behalf of the Wheaton Park District for twelve years. The event is registered with the Illinois Association of Park Districts for the Flying 4 Kids Events, raising awareness of the Park District Youth License Plates.

Go Fly A Kite was our first event in 2021 after the shutdown in March 2020 and attracted a large crowd of avid kite flyers. The sponsors included Wheaton Bank & Trust and Smile Doctors. We had Gift of Wings & Kite Team present and Stan's Donuts as a food vendor.

HIGHLIGHTS

- Our Wheaton Park District 100th Anniversary Kick-off event
- We gave away kites to the first 100 in attendance
- Stan's Donuts food truck was on site
- Sponsorship was secured at \$1,000

	2019	2021
Revenue	\$3,425.00	\$1,132.50
Expenses	-\$2,069.66	-\$3,106.25
Event Profit	\$1,155.84	\$-1,973.75



1,000+
attendees
50% increase
from 2019

\$1,000
sponsorship
secured

1ST
EVENT
of the year
after COVID



SUMMER ENTERTAINMENT SERIES

FRIDAYS & SATURDAYS | 6-9:30P | MEMORIAL PARK



EVENT SUMMARY

This was the first time the Wheaton Park District held its Summer Entertainment Series. The series began in June and ended in September. The 12 concert series helped usher in our new bandshell and showcased how much the renovation improved the original design. We charged \$10 per ticket for each show featuring two bands and each concert running from 6-9:30P.

We operated concession sales from two stands filled with snacks, drinks, and alcoholic beverages. We had one food vendor on-site. Guests were welcome to bring in their own food but not allowed to bring in alcohol. We teamed up with CERT to provide bag checking and first aid for each concert. The City of Wheaton Police Department helped monitor the park throughout the concert weekends. The Wheaton Park District focused its efforts on providing a great overall concert experience for all attendees.

7,000+
in attendance
over the
course of the
season

HIGHLIGHTS

- Positive feedback from attendees and community surveys.
- We provided an amazing experience for 7,000+ concertgoers.
- We secured \$44,000 in total sponsorship.
 - Sold 1,059 tickets.
- Generated \$205,000 in revenue. Net revenue of \$8,766.64.

\$44,000
sponsorship
secured

Revenue

2021

\$162,757.39

Expenses

-\$153,990.75

Event Profit

\$8,766.64



INDEPENDENCE DAY

JULY 3 & 4 | GRAF PARK & DOWNTOWN WHEATON

EVENT SUMMARY

The Wheaton Park District hosted the fireworks and parade with support from the City of Wheaton. We had two sponsors, Haggerty Chevrolet and Smile Doctors. There was no carnival this year but we hosted kids' activities and games, offered food concessions and ended the evening with a spectacular fireworks show. This year's theme was "Celebrate our Freedom."


HIGHLIGHTS

- Parade Entries: 90
- Received excellent feedback from the community about the firework's show & parade
- Estimated 10,000 in attendance each day



	2019	2021
Revenue	\$43,800.80	\$36,460.00
Expenses	-\$41,944.30	-\$38,519.57
Event Profit	\$1,856.50	\$-2,059.57

 **20,000+**
in attendance

 **REDUCED**
revenue on
July 3, no
carnival rides

 **THEME**
Celebrate
Our Freedom



WHEATON BREW FEST

AUGUST 7 | NOON-4:30P | MEMORIAL PARK



EVENT SUMMARY

For the tenth year, the Wheaton Park District partnered with Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA) of DuPage County to bring Wheaton Brew Fest to Wheaton. All volunteers received training prior to the event regarding pour guidelines and event details. Over 100 volunteers plus brewery reps are required to make this event happen. Our partner, CASA, handles the recruitment of these volunteers. This was a ticketed event offering four ticket types: VIP, VIP Designated Driver, General Admission, and General Admission Designated Driver. This year's theme was "It's our Beer" a play on the "It's our Year" saying. With the increase in popularity of brew fests and the growth specifically in the Chicago suburban market, the Wheaton Brew Fest team works hard to market the unique features of the event, such as the shaded park setting.

HIGHLIGHTS

- 939 tickets sold compared to 1,335 tickets sold in 2019.
- This year's event was a success thanks to our volunteers and our partner CASA of DuPage.
- The event featured more than 75 beers from 35 breweries.

75

BEERS

from 35
breweries

\$3,550
sponsorship
secured

	2019	2021
Revenue	\$79,986.59	\$57,852.29
Expenses	-\$54,859.17	-\$51,708.09
Event Profit	\$25,127.42	\$6,144.20
Wheaton Park District	\$12,563.71	\$3,072.10
CASA of DuPage	\$12,563.71	\$3,072.10



SHAKESPEARE IN THE PARK

AUGUST 26-28 | 6-9:30P | MEMORIAL PARK

EVENT SUMMARY

The Wheaton Park District partnered with Wheaton College Arena Theater to bring FREE Shakespeare in the Park to Memorial Park. This year's play was Henry IV Part 1. Wheaton College Theater Staff and Director handled all aspects of the theater and Wheaton Park District managed logistics.

HIGHLIGHTS

- Sponsorship secured = \$10,000
- Estimated 1,500 in attendance at the three performances
- After a two-year hiatus, we received a lot of positive feedback from Wheaton College and the community about this year's show.
- Concessions for the event raised more than \$1,800 for the museum.



	2018	2021
Revenue	\$15,214.81	\$12,977.32
Expenses	-\$9,812.37	-\$17,661.03
Event Profit	\$5,402.44	\$-4,683.71

▶▶▶ **\$10,000**
in sponsorship

▶▶▶ **1,500+**
total
attendance

▶▶▶ **\$1,800**
concessions
revenue,
managed by
DuPage County
Historical
Museum
Foundation



LIGHT THE TORCH NIGHT RUN

OCTOBER 2 | 6:30P | CENTRAL ATHLETIC COMPLEX



EVENT SUMMARY

2021 marked the 8th year for the FT Cares Light the Torch Night Run. Runners took to the streets of Wheaton decked out in glow necklaces, reflector shirts, costumes, and other glow-in-the-dark accessories for this lively run. This was the first year that the event was hosted alongside our October Fest celebration at the Central Athletic Complex. This race is the only race that runs south of the railroad tracks and is met with open arms from many homeowners along the course who sit on their front porches or light up their houses in participation. The event features four luminary lanes to light the way, a water station, and an after party. The combination of the two events was also received positively by attendees and our partners at First Trust.

HIGHLIGHTS

- The event was a huge success! 583 total runners registered including in-person and virtually.
- For the first time this event was combined with October Fest which featured a beer garden, live music, kids activities and more. Night Run favorites returned, including the laser light show and carnival slides.

\$56,500
sponsorship
secured

8TH
anniversary

	2019	2021
Revenue	\$81,001.77	\$71,847.66
Expenses	-\$30,949.33	-\$37,468.66
Event Profit	\$50,052.44	\$34,379.00
Wheaton Park District	\$25,026.22	\$17,189.50
First Trust Cares	\$25,026.22	\$17,189.50



REINDEER RUN

DECEMBER 4 | 8:30A | DOWNTOWN WHEATON

EVENT SUMMARY

This year marked the 10th anniversary of the Reindeer Run with partner Wheaton Lions Club. This holiday-themed race attracts all ages, from the avid runner to teams looking for something fun to get into the holiday spirit. Each year, we see a variety of costumed runners, such as Santas, elves, bags of coal, and, of course, reindeer. Runners were given a long sleeve green tech shirt and antlers. A post-race party was held at Ivy and runners were able to use a coupon that came attached to their bib if they attended the post-race party.

HIGHLIGHTS

- Sponsorship = \$45,000 – 14% over our goal
- 1,089 total runners (989 in person and 100 virtual)
- The 10th Annual Reindeer Run had beautiful weather for this year's race!
- **New this year** – inflatable snow globe for a photo opportunity and Christmas Carolers



	2019	2021
Revenue	\$80,370.75	\$76,494.12
Expenses	-\$32,596.08	-\$25,204.84
Event Profit	\$47,774.67	\$51,289.28
Wheaton Park District	\$23,887.34	\$25,644.64
Lions Club	\$23,887.34	\$25,644.64



17%

increase in
runners from
2019



\$45,000

sponsorship
secured



10TH

anniversary



ADDITIONAL EVENTS

FIELD OF HONOR

JUNE 30-JULY 4

The Field of Honor was hosted by the Wheaton Park District and Warrenville VFW Post 8081. Proceeds benefitted Warrenville American Legion Posts 8081 and 589. Two thousand American flags were displayed to honor a military veteran or active service member, fallen military member, first responder or other local hero. The display was free to view and ran from June 30 to July 4.



VETERANS DAY

NOVEMBER 8-11

To honor our Veterans, 66 flags were installed around the walkways at Memorial Park as well as five service flags to represent the Army, Navy, Air Force, Marines and Coast Guard. More than 50 additional flags are also installed around the perimeter of Longfellow Elementary School. Daily tributes occurred on November 8, 9 and 10. From 4 to 4:45P the park featured a bagpiper and vocalist to help pay tribute to our veterans.



DOWNTOWN WHEATON CHRISTMAS PARADE

FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 26 | 6P | DOWNTOWN WHEATON

Just for this year, the Downtown Wheaton Association reached out to the Wheaton Park District to help coordinate and plan the Christmas Parade held on November 26 in Downtown Wheaton. We had 48 entries in the parade and an estimated 5,000 plus in attendance. Parks crew and Marketing department coordinated the route, DJ stand, and barricades to help the parade run smoothly. Memorial Park and the City Hall's parking lot were used to help line up vehicles and marchers for the route.



ADDITIONAL REVENUE GENERATION

The Wheaton Park District Special Events are a true collaboration between Marketing, Special Facilities and Park Services staff. While the goal continues to focus on sustainability and revenue growth, when possible, the events are also a revenue source for other internal departments such as Parks Services Department, Mary Lubko Center, Parks Plus Fitness Center and DuPage County Historical Museum as outlined below. All of which are paid from event proceeds.

The Parks Services staff provides full time and part time staff for event set up, execution, signage, and tear down, which allows us to keep costs lower when possible. We also use our own equipment like tables, chairs and tents when possible. In 2021, special events provided a total of \$35,529.97 covering labor hours and \$7,350.00 for printing of signage.

Mary Lubko Center is housed within Memorial Park, which provides a location for staff to meet and coordinate event details, volunteer training and rentals for additional revenue at the Summer Entertainment Series. In 2021, special events provided \$4,800.00 to the Mary Lubko Center.

Parks Plus Fitness Center Manager serves as Race Director for our races. They handle USTAF certification, coordination with the timing company and any and all participant questions or needs. In 2021, Parks Plus Fitness received \$3,656.00 for this service.

DuPage County Historical Museum provides assistance at Wheaton Brew Fest and Lions Club Reindeer Run. In 2021, DuPage County Historical Museum received \$2,500.00.

WHEATON PARK DISTRICT FOUNDATIONS & COMMUNITY ORGANIZATIONS 2021



The Cosley Zoo Foundation received \$8,297.37 from the Light the Torch Run event proceeds.



FT CARES Foundation generated \$25,026.52 for their nonprofit beneficiary organizations.



DuPage County Historical Museum Foundation received \$8,297.37 from the Wheaton Brew Fest Event, Light the Torch Run and Lions Club event proceeds.



CASA of DuPage generated \$3,072.10 for their organization.



Sensory Garden Playground received \$4,297.37 from the Light the Torch Night Run event proceeds.



Wheaton Lions Club generated \$25,644.64 for their organization.

LOOKING TOWARD 2022

Ice-A-Palooza	February 5 Winter event featuring ice skating and character visits
Fun Run in Color	April 9 Returning after two years
Go Fly A Kite	May 7 Bringing back candy drop and more kids' activities
Cream of Wheaton	June 2-5 Return of the traditional Cream of Wheaton & full four-day event schedule
Summer Concerts	Select Fridays & Saturdays, June 24-September 17 Allow for capacity of 1,200
FREE Monday Concerts	July 11 & August 8 Single Family Performance with open admission
Fourth of July	July 3 & 4 Fireworks & Event at Graf Park Parade route with viewing stand returning to Front Street
Wheaton Brew & Seltzer Fest	August 6 Refreshed format with headliner band and seltzer varieties
Shakespeare in the Park	August 25-27 Free Shakespeare theater with open admission – featuring <i>A Midsummer Nights' Dream</i>
Light the Torch Night Run	October 1 5K run in tandem with October Fest event
Reindeer Run	December 3 5K holiday run

