
WHEATON PARK DISTRICT



2019
SPECIAL
EVENT
ANNUAL REPORT

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Thank you to DuPage Camera Club for their volunteer efforts in 2019 capturing amazing moments at our special events.

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

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Wheaton Park District is host to more than 90,000 people at our ten annual special events. These events offer the residents of Wheaton and neighboring communities a wide variety of activities, music, runs and much more. Each event has unique attributes and rely heavily on the park district staff, community partners and volunteers.

Parks and Rec Business recently published an article "More Muscle" written by Kristina Nemetz that talks about our partnership model and how it can add to agency special events (pages 22-26).

In 2019, the Wheaton Park District showcased nine large special events. These included: Ice-A-Palooza, Go Fly a Kite, Fun Run in Color, Taste of Wheaton, Independence Day, Music Mondays, Wheaton Brew Fest, Light the Torch 5K Night Run and Reindeer Run. Shakespeare in the Park did not happen in 2019 due to Memorial Park construction but will return in 2020.

The DuPage County Historical Museum and Cosley Zoo hosted an additional seven large-scale events. These included Casino Night, Cosley Zoo Run for the Animals, Cosley Uncorked, Cosley Classic, Pumpkin Fest, October Fest and Festival of Lights and Tree Sale.

Each year these events support ongoing exhibit development at those institutions but also rely on the special events team. Those event reports are included in the individual facility annual reports.

The district's sustainable business model continues to approach each event strategically to meet and exceed several goals and objectives as follows:

- Develop a budget to outline what is needed to break even prior to the event day.
- Be self-sustaining through sponsorship, registration, ticket sales, vendor fees, and/or alternate revenue sources.
- Work together with community partners to create a larger impact through shared resources.
- Account for labor hours of the Parks Services Department.
- Increase traffic to our facilities, parks and the City of Wheaton through the execution of these events.
- Fulfill the park district mission, spread the awareness and promote the park district brand (Create.Discover.Play).



2019 AT A GLANCE

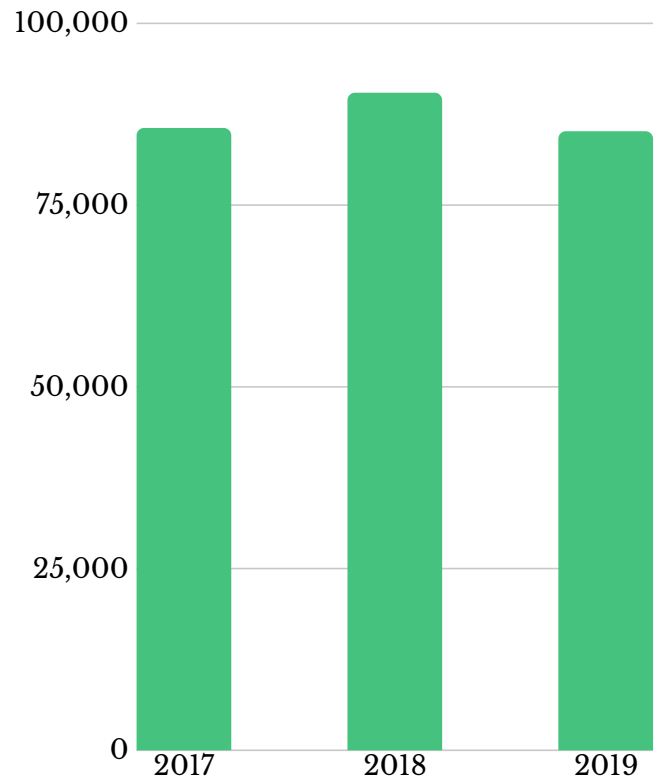
GOALS & OBJECTIVES

Special events seek to make a profit in an effort 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.

Highlights:

- Memorial Park renovation project
- Alternate 4th of July parade route due to construction
- Increase in Race Wheaton participation

EVENT ATTENDANCE



\$179,440

TOTAL SPONSORSHIP

4% decrease over 2018.

\$10,971,450

in estimated economic impact.

5%

INCREASE

in net revenue to the park district.

MEET THE TEAM

MARKETING



Margie Wilhelmi
Director of
Marketing



Kristina Nemetz
Superintendent of
Marketing &
Special Events



Amy Seklecki
Marketing &
Special Events
Coordinator



Carey Moreland
Marketing &
Development
Coordinator

SPECIAL FACILITIES



Andy Bendy
Director of
Special Facilities



Dan Novak
Superintendent of
Special Facilities

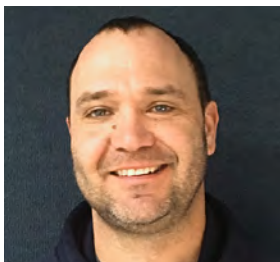


Kim Prazak
Assistant to Director
of Special Facilities

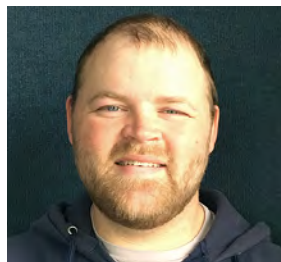


Michelle Artis
Parks Plus Fitness
Center Manager

PARKS SERVICES



Nic Novak
Superintendent of
Projects & Events



Brian Barry
Special Event
Sign Specialist

FINANCE



Mary Janik
Finance Assistant



Joanna Koppang
Finance Assistant

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 (CERT) 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. CERT 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 have been a great partner, offering the district use of its parking lots at no charge for both 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.



ICE-A-PALOOZA

February 9 | Central Athletic Complex



EVENT SUMMARY

Ice-A-Palooza takes place at the Central Athletic Complex outdoor ice rinks. This event was a culmination of team work on behalf of the Special Event staff along with the Park Services, Recreation and Athletics departments. The free event took place from 11A-2P on a Saturday afternoon and featured visits from Disney Princesses, Anna and Elsa. Additional activities included open skating, games, roasting s'mores over a bonfire and activities by Wide Horizons preschool, a live ice sculptor, snow painting, and skate rental from Play It Again Sports.

800+
attendees

\$250
in sponsorship

2ND
year annual event

HIGHLIGHTS

- The Center for Ice of DuPage presented three ice performances that were well received from the audience.
- Our very own Wheaton Park District staff put on a superhero vs. Disney character hockey game for the kids to enjoy.
- One sponsor was on-site.
- Marketing included poster distribution, community signage, social media, email marketing, program guide promotion, hand out to preschools and more.
- Arrowhead Golf Club sold \$1,216.71 at the concession area.

	2019	2018	2017
Revenue	\$250	\$0*	-
Expenses	\$-3,940.83	\$-4,664.24	-
Event Profit	\$-3,690.83	\$-4,664.24	-
Wheaton Park District	\$-3,690.83	\$-4,664.24	

*Sponsors were not secured for this event specifically, but several companies sponsored the ice rink facility in 2018. This revenue was accounted for in the facility budget.

FUN RUN IN COLOR

April 13 | Downtown Wheaton | Rotary Club of Wheaton AM



EVENT SUMMARY

In its sixth year, the 2019 Fun Run in Color welcomed more than 900 runners and spectators. Fun Run in Color is a casual, untimed running event for people of all abilities; even non-runners and young children can join in the fun. The “color” is food-grade cornstarch that is 100% natural, non-toxic, safe and biodegradable. By the end of the race, participants were covered in different colors and enjoyed the after-party which included a DJ, final color throw and sponsor and vendor booths.

922

runners registered

\$25,560

in sponsorship

8%

decrease in expenses

HIGHLIGHTS

- Supplies and contractual expenses were lower compared to past three years.
- \$4,300 in additional sponsorship was raised over 2018 (20% increase).
- Five sponsors were on-site to interact with runners and pass out giveaways.
- \$10,000 (53% of the Wheaton Park District event proceeds) was donated to Play for All Playground & Garden Foundation.
- Marketing included poster distribution, community signage, social media, email marketing, paid advertisements, website and Race Wheaton cross promoton.

	2019	2018	2017
Revenue	\$57,472.16	\$49,221.00	\$55,227.50
Expenses	\$-20,061.37	\$-21,659.21	\$-22,441.46
Event Profit	\$37,410.79	\$27,561.79	\$32,786.04
Wheaton Rotary	\$18,705.39	\$13,780.90	\$16,393.02
Wheaton Park District	\$18,705.40	\$13,780.90	\$16,393.02

GO FLY A KITE

May 4 | Graf Park



EVENT SUMMARY

Originating in April 2009 as part of the City of Wheaton’s celebration of its sesquicentennial, this event has continued on behalf of the Wheaton Park District for over 10 years. The event is registered with Illinois Association of Park Districts as a Flying 4 Kids Events. The event is offered free to the community, encouraging families to get outdoors. The Chicago Fire Kite Team provided kite flying demonstrations. Gift of Wings (a kite store out of Milwaukee, WI) assists us in coordinating entertainment with the professional kite teams and helps run the activities such as Most Unique Kite, Highest Flying Kite, and a crowd favorite: the Kid’s Candy Drop.

500+

in attendance. This is a 20% decrease over last year

\$3,330

in sponsorship

3%

decrease in event proceeds

HIGHLIGHTS

- Wheaton Eye Clinic was our presenting sponsor for the seventh year. Five additional business vendors were on-site.
- The event received 15% of on-site kite sales proceeds from Gift of Wings. This year totaled \$125.50.
- Wheaton Rams Football Board ran concessions for the second year for the event and made over \$800 for their programs. This is \$200 more than the profit made last year.
- Marketing included poster distribution, community signage, social media, email marketing, paid advertisements and more.

	2019	2018	2017
Revenue	\$3,425.50	\$3,901.75	\$4,388.55
Expenses	-\$2,269.66	-\$2,209.50	-\$2,769.50
Event Profit	\$1,155.84	\$1,692.25	\$1,619.05
Wheaton Park District	\$1,155.84	\$1,692.25	\$1,619.05

TASTE OF WHEATON

May 30- June 2 | Memorial Park | Wheaton Chamber of Commerce



EVENT SUMMARY

Taste of Wheaton is a four-day fest presented in partnership with the Wheaton Chamber of Commerce. This year marked the eleventh year of the partnership with the Chamber. The Chamber assists with sponsorship recruitment, business expo vendors and coordinates volunteers. On Thursday night we continued #ThrowbackThursday to honor the event's previous title and format, Cream of Wheaton. The first 500 attendees received a color changing cup. The event continues to grow and this year featured 18 food vendors, 30 craft show vendors, carnival rides, live entertainment, business expo vendors, Art in the Park, Touch-A-Truck, and the Cosley Zoo Run for the Animals 5K/10K race. More than 100 volunteers assisted in making the events fun and safe.

HIGHLIGHTS

- Hi-Infidelity returned for the fifth year as Saturday's musical headliner.
- Saturday beverage sales exceeded \$25,000.
- Activities on Karlskoga (Saturday) featured a teddy bear check-up, tie dye station, touch-a-trucks, character visits and park district facility booths.
- Sponsorship for this event totaled \$35,000.
- Food vendor revenue increased by 13%.
- Business expo revenue increased by 4% over 2018.
- Marketing included poster distribution, community signage, city light pole banners, social media, paid advertisements, PTA promotions, email marketing and more

40,000+
attendees over
4 days

MORE THAN
\$50,000
in carnival sales

OVER 100
food, art & craft and
business vendors on-site

	2019	2018	2017
Revenue	\$197,985.15	\$200,282.62	\$202,607.43
Expenses	\$-99,413.59	\$-100,546.32	\$-107,359.78
Event Profit	\$98,571.56	\$99,736.30	\$95,247.65
Wheaton Chamber	\$49,285.78	\$49,868.15	\$47,623.83
Wheaton Park District	\$49,285.78	\$49,868.15	\$47,623.83

INDEPENDENCE DAY

July 3 & 4 | Graf Park & Downtown Wheaton



EVENT SUMMARY

The Wheaton Park District hosted the fireworks and parade for the ninth year with financial support from the City of Wheaton. Additional sponsorship is secured by the district and fees are charged to July 3 food vendors and parade entries to help cover the cost of the two-day event. We utilized the same pyrotechnics company for fireworks that was used in 2018 based on the rave reviews from the staff and public. The event also featured a flag ceremony, DJ, food vendors and carnival rides. The theme this year was “Home Grown” and paid tribute to hometown Wheaton and those who were born and raised here and those who call Wheaton home today. More than 70 volunteers help make the two-day event successful.

HIGHLIGHTS

- The district showcased many of its departments and programs in the parade, including Cosley Zoo, Arrowhead Golf Club, Wheaton Wings Soccer, Wheaton Rams Cheerleading, Wheaton Wolverines Lacrosse and the Parks Services Department.
- For the first year, Vicki Austin announced parade entries at the viewing stand.
- The parade route was adjusted to end with the viewing stand at Wheaton Ave and Union due to the downtown Wheaton construction.
- The Wheaton Lions Club was the 2019 Grand Marshal.

22

minute firework show

40,000+

in attendance over two-day event

MORE

THAN 90

parade entries

	2019	2018	2017
Revenue	\$43,800.80	\$45,302.70	\$43,641.73
Expenses	\$-41,954.34	\$-42,582.57	\$-43,031.60
Event Profit	\$1,846.46	\$2,720.13	\$610.33
Wheaton Park District	\$1,846.46	\$2,720.13	\$610.13

MUSIC MONDAYS

July 8, 15, 22, 29 | Memorial Park



EVENT SUMMARY

For the sixth year, the park district hosted free concerts in Memorial Park on Mondays in July. The goal of this event is to provide family entertainment for residents of all ages. 2019 was the last summer for Music Mondays due to the reconstruction of the band shell in Memorial Park. Each week staff organized activities for children to commemorate the final series. The activities included tie-dye, a scavenger hunt, giant Jenga, Connect 4 and giveaways.

HIGHLIGHTS

- Approximately 300-350 people attended each of the free Music Mondays in July for a total estimated attendance of 1,250.
- Sponsorship for this event totaled \$3,700.
- The concession stand sold popcorn, soda, and ice cream with total sales of \$788.89, an increase of 14%.
- Each week featured a different Wheaton Park District facility including Lincoln Marsh, Cosley Zoo and DuPage County Historical Museum who was on-site to cross promote programs.
- Music acts were well-received by the residents. The lineup included: Peace Road, Rock Steady, South of Disorder and The Sting Rays.

\$700
in concession sales

1,250+
estimated in attendance

12%
increase in sponsorship

	2019	2018	2017
Revenue	\$4,488.89	\$3,555.55	\$3,890.74
Expenses	\$-3,616.27	\$-2,789.95	\$-2,137.60
Event Profit	\$872.62	\$765.60	\$1,753.14
Wheaton Park District	\$872.62	\$765.60	\$1,753.14

WHEATON BREW FEST

August 3 | Memorial Park | CASA of DuPage County



EVENT SUMMARY

For the ninth year, the Wheaton Park District partnered with Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA) of DuPage County. The staff works closely with the Illinois Liquor Commission to ensure all rules and regulations are followed for the safety of our guests. More than 100 CASA volunteers plus brewery reps are required to make this event happen. This is a ticketed event offering four ticket types: VIP, VIP Designated Driver, General Admission and General Admission Designated Driver. With the increase in popularity of brew fests 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. This year, the fest carried a "It's a Brewtiful Life" theme.

HIGHLIGHTS

- Attendance for this year's event was 1,335.
- Streamlined process using Eventbrite for ticket sales which led to lower credit card processing fees of about \$1,100.
- 11% decrease in revenue due to 200 less tickets sold.
- Highest concession sales in the past 3 years.
- Received 2nd place award for IPRA Agency Showcase for Marketing Campaign.
- Marketing continued offering \$5 coupon codes throughout various times of the sales period through email marketing and social media.

71
tickets sold at door

\$7,000
in sponsorship

50%
of ticket sales take place 10 days prior

	2019	2018	2017
Revenue	\$79,986.59	\$89,883.33	\$80,391.39
Expenses	-\$54,859.17	-\$55,046.05	-\$52,585.00
Event Profit	\$25,127.42	\$34,837.28	\$27,806.39
CASA of DuPage County	\$12,563.71	\$17,418.64	\$13,903.20
Wheaton Park District	\$12,563.71	\$17,418.64	\$13,903.19

LIGHT THE TORCH NIGHT RUN

September 28 | Downtown Wheaton | FT Cares Foundation



EVENT SUMMARY

2019 marked the fifth year for the FT Cares Light the Torch 5K Night Run. Runners took to the streets of Wheaton decked out in glow necklaces, reflector shirts, costumes, and other glow-in-the-dark accessories. This is the only district race that runs south of the railroad tracks and is met with open arms from many homeowners along the course. They watch from their front yard, porches or light up their houses in participation. The event features luminary lanes to light the way, a water station and an after-party featuring a laser light show. For the first time this year, a beer tent was added to create a street fest feel and the event moved to a Saturday. We had 823 runners, a decrease of 9% due to other race and event competition. Our partner, the FT Cares Foundation, is the charitable arm of First Trust Portfolios. They support a variety of charities throughout the year; their mission is to make a difference locally, nationally and globally. The FT Cares Foundation handles sponsorship and volunteer recruitment for this event.

\$54,100
in sponsorship

823
runners

HIGHLIGHTS

- Sponsorship totaled \$54,100.
- 79 day of race registrations.
- The after-party featured a laser light show, post-race refreshment tent, DJ, awards, food trucks, inflatable, fun slide, face painting and vendors.
- Proceeds from this event benefited Special Spaces, Western DuPage Special Recreation Association, Team Rubicon, Cosley Foundation, Play for All Playground & Garden Foundation and DuPage County Historical Museum Foundation.

\$2,000
increase in runner
registration over 2018

	2019*	2018	2017
Revenue	\$81,001.77	\$80,660.92	\$78,729.09
Expenses	\$-30,949.33	\$-33,214.35	\$-30,818.25
Event Profit	\$50,052.44	\$47,446.57	\$47,910.84
FT Cares Foundation	\$25,026.22	\$23,723.29	\$23,955.42
Wheaton Park District	\$25,026.22	\$23,723.28	\$23,955.42

*Based on non-audited projected figures as of February 2020.

REINDEER RUN

December 7 | Downtown Wheaton | Wheaton Lions Club



EVENT SUMMARY

This year marked the eighth year of the Lions Club Reindeer Run. We had 1,104 runners register. An offer was extended to local elementary and high schools for the first time to fundraise for the PTA. Over 120 runners took advantage of this offer and over \$600 was donated back to the participating schools. All registrants received a commemorative blue long-sleeve tech shirt, antlers and finisher medal. This holiday-themed race attracts all types, 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.

1,104
runners

\$45,000
in sponsorship

HIGHLIGHTS

- \$45,000 in sponsorship was secured, an increase from 2018.
- An increase in expenses was due to finisher medals and shirt expense based on growth projections.
- In-kind donations for post-race refreshments, included Culligan of Wheaton (water), Einstein Bagels (bagels), protein bars (Power Crunch) and Five and Hoek Coffee (coffee).
- A portion of the Wheaton Park District proceeds benefited the DuPage County Historical Museum Foundation and the Cosley Foundation.

\$600+
donated to local schools
through the PTA Fundraiser

	2019	2018	2017
Revenue	\$80,370.75	\$73,994.00	\$80,608.50
Expenses	\$32,596.08	\$-29,392.35	\$-24,691.74
Event Profit	\$47,774.67	\$44,601.65	\$55,916.76
Wheaton Lions Club	\$23,887.34	\$22,300.83	\$27,958.38
Wheaton Park District	\$23,887.33	\$22,300.82	\$27,958.38

*Based on non-audited projected figures as of February 2020.

RACE WHEATON



EVENT SUMMARY

The Race Wheaton Package was offered for the fourth year. This package included all four of our races at a discounted price of \$100 per runner. The four-race package was available up until Fun Run in Color packet pick-up takes place. After Fun Run, we continued to offer it as a three-race package for \$75 until the Cosley Zoo Run for the Animals packet pick-up. Runners registered for Race Wheaton received a commemorative Race Wheaton shirt. We will continue to offer this in 2020, as it helps each of the races grow individually and is a great promotion to encourage health and wellness in the Wheaton community.

237
participants

\$6,000
in sponsorship

HIGHLIGHTS

- Race Wheaton participation increased by 37 runners.
- DuPage Medical Group sponsored 3 of the four races.
- Sponsorship revenue is distributed in individual race budgets.
- Finisher medals were added to each race after they were well received by Race Wheaton participants in 2018.
- In 2019, individual race fees increased so the race package remains even more attractive.

39
average age of Race
Wheaton participants

	2019	2018	2017
	237 Runners	200 Runners	202 Runners
Registration Revenue	\$23,000	\$20,000	\$20,200
Individual Race Revenue	\$5,750	\$5,000	\$5,050

EVENT MARKETING

350

hats given to Wheaton Brew Fest VIP ticketholders



OVER 7,500

homeowners along race and parade routes received a notice of the event

300+

posters distributed over 2019 event season



2019 fun run IN COLOR Saturday, April 13 8:30A
 ROTARY CLUB OF WHEATON AM | WHEATON PARK DISTRICT

Highlights:

- Participants receive a commemorative race shirt and finisher medal
- Vibrant color stations throughout the 3.0 mile race course
- Post-race refreshments and after-party

wheatonparkdistrict.com/funrun
 racewheaton

Race Route



LIGHT THE TORCH 5K NIGHT RUN
 Saturday, September 28 | Race start 7PM

HIGHLIGHTS

- Event kicks off with pre-party at 5:30PM
- Fun for avid runners and walkers of all ages
- Features luminary lanes
- Laser lights illuminate the final stretch to the finish line
- Beer garden and food vendors
- After-party open to the public
- All runners receive a race shirt and finisher medal
- Glow and light-up giveaways
- A portion of the proceeds benefit Special Spaces, Western DuPage Special Recreation Association, Team Rubicon, Play for All Playground & Garden Foundation, Cosley Zoo Foundation and the DuPage County Historical Museum.

WE PROVIDE THE FUN, YOU PROVIDE THE LIGHT!

wheatonparkdistrict.com Sponsored by **First Trust**

MORE THAN 4,000

event shirts worn by runners, volunteers and staff

> 60,000

received our promotional emails

37%

average email open rate

MORE THAN 500

race registrations and event tickets were purchased in 2019 following promotional email



2,927

finisher medals earned



60+

community banners displayed at high-volume intersections



GENERATING REVENUE FOR DISTRICT DEPARTMENTS

The Wheaton Park District Special Event model is strong due to the collaboration of Special Facilities, Marketing and Park Services staff. While our goal is for our special events to be sustainable and revenue generating when possible, the events have also become a revenue source for other internal departments as they provide key services: Park Services Department (labor and signage), Mary Lubko Center (building rental), Parks Plus Fitness Center (Race Director assistance and facility rental) and DuPage County Historical Museum (building rental).

PARKS SERVICES DEPARTMENT

	LABOR	SIGNAGE
ICE-A-PALOOZA	\$0.00	\$0.00
FUN RUN IN COLOR	\$2,305.80	\$2,913.53
GO FLY A KITE	\$1,000.00	\$625.00
TASTE OF WHEATON	\$14,932.42	\$5,689.58
INDEPENDANCE DAY	\$4,306.53	\$2,306.25
MUSIC MONDAYS	\$0.00	\$163.54
WHEATON BREW FEST	\$3,805.54	\$1,837.50
LIGHT THE TORCH NIGHT RUN	\$3,000.00	\$2,951.04
REINDEER RUN	\$1,966.15	\$2,400.00
TOTAL	\$31,316.44	\$18,886.44



MARY LUBKO CENTER

	RENTAL FEE
FUN RUN IN COLOR	\$200.00
TASTE OF WHEATON	\$800.00
WHEATON BREW FEST	\$200.00
TOTAL	\$1,200.00

DUPAGE COUNTY HISTORICAL MUSUEM

	% OF PROCEEDS
WHEATON BREW FEST	\$3,000.00
REINDEER RUN	\$2,500.00
TOTAL	\$5,500.00

SPONSORSHIP

The Special Event model of breaking even prior to the day of the event is accomplished by securing sponsorship, in-kind donations and offering advanced ticket sales. The district is fortunate to have many returning businesses each year that sponsor and provide support for the events. In exchange, sponsors receive numerous marketing benefits based on their financial level of support. In-kind donations provide produce valued at hundreds of dollars that is not reflected in the chart below.

	2019	2018	2017
ICE-A-PALOOZA	\$250	\$0	\$0
FUN RUN IN COLOR	\$25,560	\$21,250	\$26,750
GO FLY A KITE	\$3,300	\$3,750	\$4,250
TASTE OF WHEATON	\$35,000	\$39,000	\$42,250
INDEPENDENCE DAY	\$4,750	\$4,550	\$4,250
MUSIC MONDAY	\$3,700	\$3,000	\$3,625
WHEATON BREW FEST	\$7,000	\$7,500	\$7,000
SHAKESPEARE IN THE PARK	\$0	\$10,000	\$7,000
LIGHT THE TORCH NIGHT RUN	\$54,100	\$56,100	\$54,350
REINDEER RUN	\$45,000	\$42,600	\$41,000
TOTAL	\$178,660	\$187,750	\$190,475

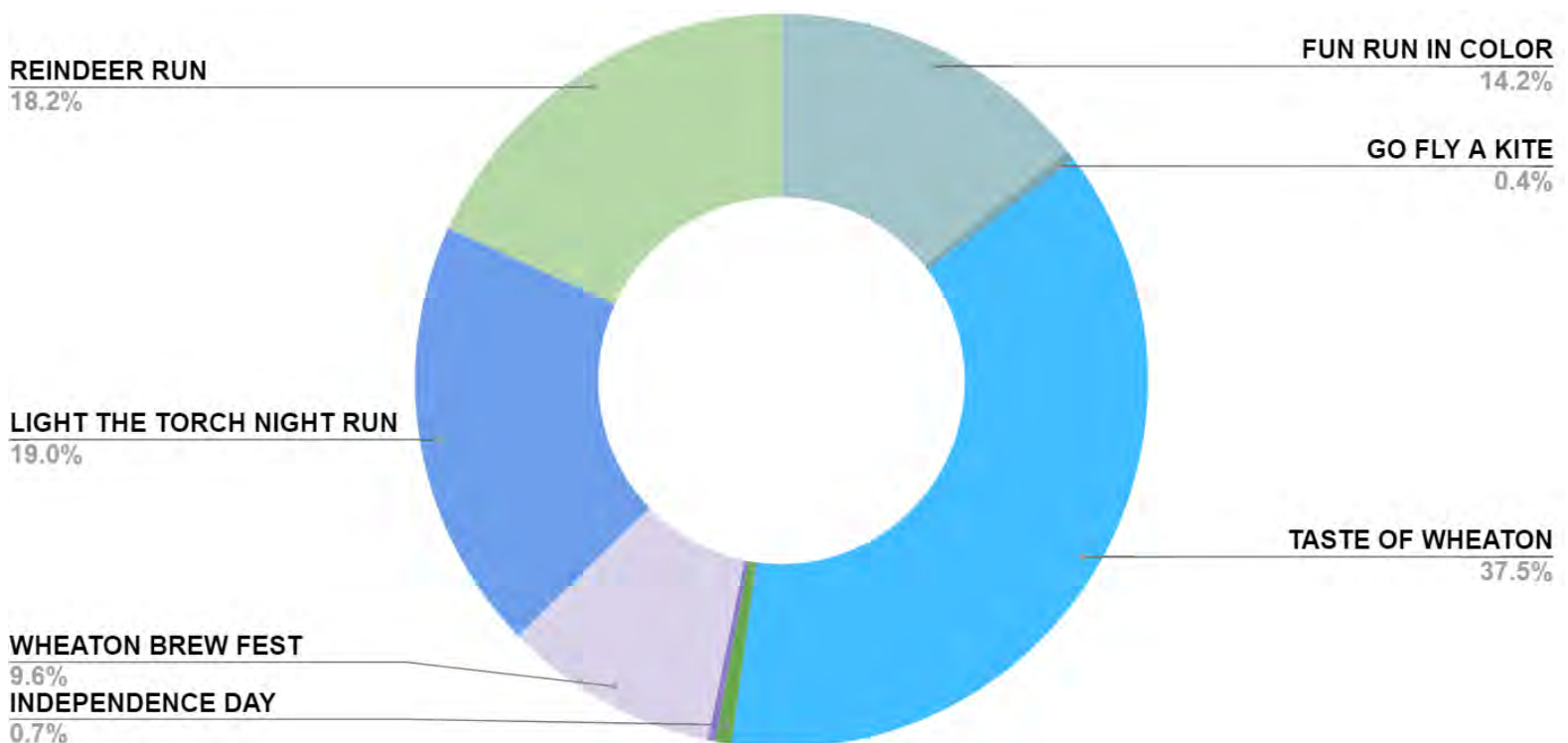


REVENUE AND REACH

Economic impact is the potential financial benefits resulting from hosting a special event within a community. According to eventimpacts.com, “measuring the economic impact not only allows public sector bodies to evaluate their economic return on investment, but also it demonstrates how events drive the economy”. Based on information obtained from the DuPage Convention & Visitors Bureau, the direct economic impact of our special events on the Wheaton economy is more than \$10 million in 2019. The calculation is based on \$129 spent per person through attendance and participation in our events. We have calculated the estimated economic impact of our special events on the City of Wheaton using this figure.

	NET TO DISTRICT	ESTIMATED ATTENDANCE	ESTIMATED ECONOMIC IMPACT
ICE-A-PALOOZA	(-\$3,690.83)	800	\$103,200
FUN RUN IN COLOR	\$18,705.40	1,200	\$154,800
GO FLY A KITE	\$1,155.84	600	\$77,400
TASTE OF WHEATON	\$49,285.78	45,000	\$5,805,000
INDEPENDENCE DAY	\$1,846.46	32,000	\$4,128,000
MUSIC MONDAY	\$872.62	1,250	\$161,250
WHEATON BREW FEST	\$12,563.71	1,500	\$193,500
LIGHT THE TORCH NIGHT RUN	\$25,062.22	1,200	\$154,800
REINDEER RUN	\$23,887.33	1,500	\$193,500
TOTAL	\$129,688.53	85,050	\$10,971,450

REVENUE GENERATED BY SPECIAL EVENT



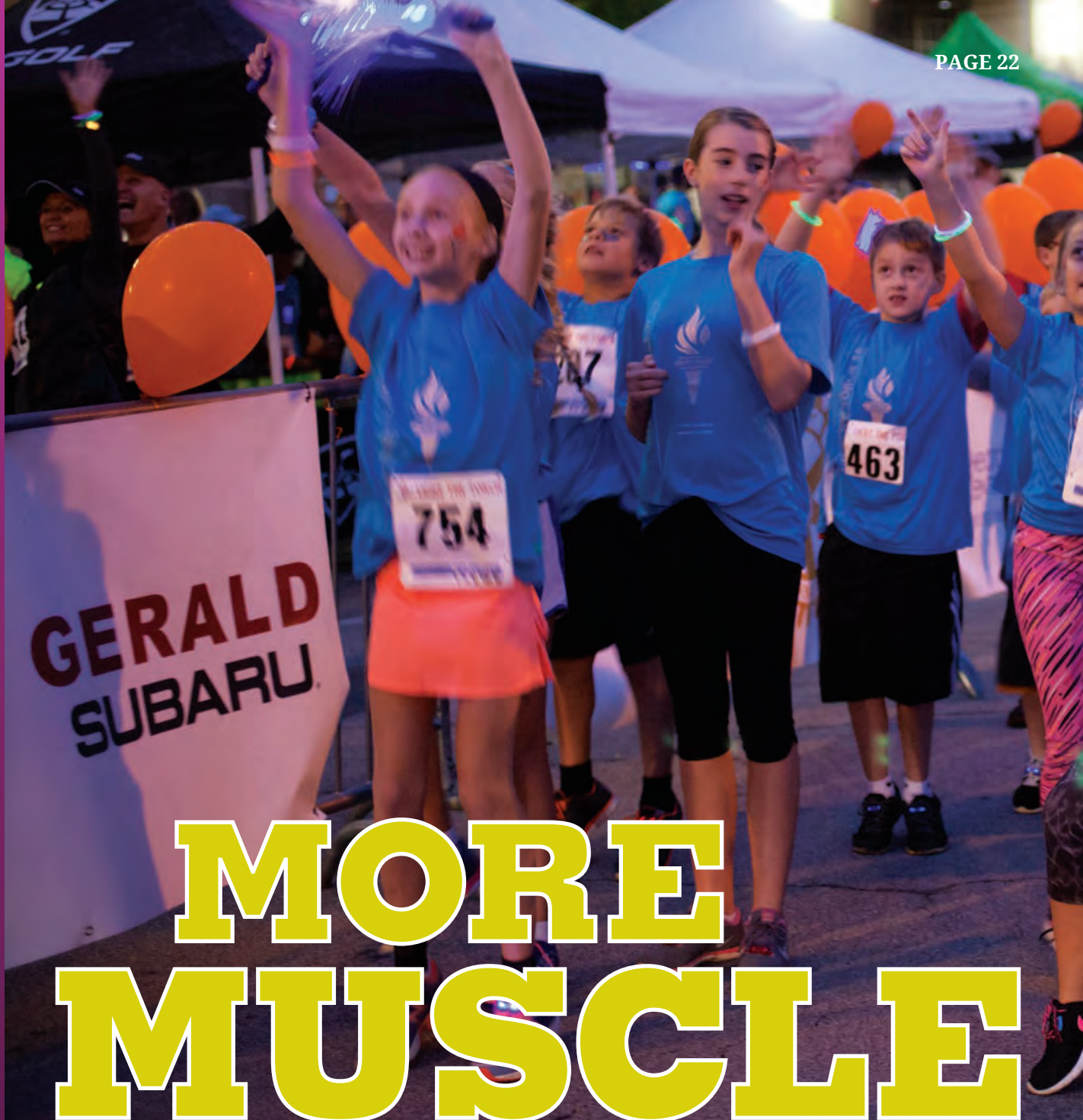
GIVING BACK TO THE COMMUNITY

Wheaton Park District Special Events continue to have a strong impact on the Wheaton community and our partnering organizations. In 2019, we were able to give back more than \$170,000 to charitable organizations, local 501(c)3s and other community organizations. The events also provide an enormous economic impact on the downtown Wheaton businesses.

	PARTNER	DISBURSEMENT
FUN RUN IN COLOR	<i>Rotary Club of Wheaton AM</i>	\$18,705.39
	<i>Play for All Playground & Garden Foundation*</i>	\$10,000.00
TASTE OF WHEATON WHEATON BREW FEST	<i>Wheaton Chamber of Commerce</i>	\$49,285.78
	<i>CASA of DuPage</i>	\$12,563.71
	<i>DuPage County Historical Museum Foundation**</i>	\$5,800.00
LIGHT THE TORCH NIGHT RUN	<i>FT Cares Foundation</i>	\$25,062.22
	<i>Cosley Foundation*</i>	\$6,256.55
	<i>DuPage County Historical Museum Foundation*</i>	\$6,256.55
REINDEER RUN	<i>Play for All Playground & Garden Foundation*</i>	\$6,256.55
	<i>Wheaton Lions Club</i>	\$23,887.34
	<i>DuPage County Historical Museum Foundation*</i>	\$4,000.00
	<i>Cosley Foundation*</i>	\$4,000.00
	TOTAL IMPACT	\$172,074.09

*Disbursements are from the Wheaton Park District event proceeds.
 **Concession sales.





MORE MUSCLE

GIVE SPECIAL EVENTS

SOME EXTRA PIZAZZ

WITH A PARTNERSHIP

By Kristina Nemetz

In the last six years, the Wheaton Park District in Illinois has given more than \$700,000 in special-event proceeds to local nonprofits and organizations. While the park district maintains a portion of the proceeds from some of the events to help cover administrative costs (and not all of the special events finish in the black), the district does its best to host events to raise money for charitable organizations. As the economy and times change, it is imperative for park districts to recognize their reliance on tax



dollars and do their part to give back to the communities they serve. For the Wheaton Park District, there was no better way to do this than to find a good partner.

The district's Executive Director, Michael Benard, has worked to create partnerships to fund approximately 60 percent of the district's large annual events. The partnerships are not always perfect—they come with their own sets of struggles—but in the right hands, they are extremely successful in providing high-level special events and raising a lot of money.

WHEATON PARK DISTRICT SPECIAL-EVENT PARTNERSHIPS

MONTH	EVENT	PARTNERING ORGANIZATION	TOTAL EVENT PROFIT IN 2017	PARTICIPATION
April	Fun Run In Color	Wheaton Rotary AM	\$32,786.04	1,200
June	Taste of Wheaton	Wheaton Chamber of Commerce	\$95,247.65	30,000
August	Wheaton Brew Fest	CASA of DuPage	\$27,803.39	1,800
September	Light the Torch Night Run	FT Cares Foundation	\$47,910.84	1,000
December	Reindeer Run	Wheaton Lions Charities	\$55,916.76	1,400



READY. SET. GLOW.

One of the district's most successful partnerships is the Light the Torch Night Run. While it is not the most lucrative event, nor the most attended, the partnership is priceless. The FT Cares Foundation is the charitable arm of a local financial company that requested expertise and logistical assistance in planning and coordinating a 5K race after work for its employees. What came of the first meeting was a powerful partnership that has now transformed lives locally, nationally, and globally.

So what does it take to find a partner that is willing to shoulder the load of a top-notch event? Take a look:

STEP 1

ESTABLISH NEED AND MUTUAL RESPECT. FT Cares was looking to create an event to promote awareness of its foundation, raise additional money for the nonprofit, and create a special event in downtown Wheaton. From the district's perspective, it was seen as a growth opportunity for the already-established connection with First Trust Portfolios, the financial company in which FT Cares Foundation was formed.

STEP 2

TRANSFORM THE PARTNERSHIP INTO A REAL RELATIONSHIP. In the initial meetings, the park district and the foundation's Development Director talked through what needed to be accomplished for a successful event and to determine which entity would fulfill each responsibility. While not every partnership is 100-percent equal in responsibilities, the value of a partner's duties can save a large amount of time for a district. For the Light the Torch Night Run, for example, FT Cares Foundation takes the lead on recruiting sponsors for the race. The foundation has great contacts in the financial sector, so while the district does assist with some recruitment, FT Cares Foundation does 90 percent, which was projected at more than \$56,000 in sponsorship for the race in 2018.

WHO DOES WHAT?

Here's a look at the breakdown of responsibilities between the park district and FT Cares Foundation for the Night Run:

WHEATON PARK DISTRICT
Marketing (advertising, PR, graphics, signage)
Operational planning and city permits
Logistics and route planning
Staffing for set up, execution, take down
Timing, certification, race director
Registration (including cash handling)
Vendor recruitment (DJ, carnival, laser show, food)
Financial reporting/ auditing
FT CARES FOUNDATION
Sponsorship
Volunteer recruitment
Coordinating packet pick-up
Purchasing (shirts, awards, luminaries, giveaways)

STEP 3 **SEEK GOOD COMMUNICATION AND ACCOUNTABILITY.** This is crucial for a successful partnership. After the race, there is a wrap-up meeting to take notes for the next year. Approximately nine to 10 months before the next event, a kick-off meeting is held to set pricing and sponsorship levels and to discuss any major changes. A partnership committee then meets about once a month beginning six months before the race. But above all, there is trust that each side is handling its responsibilities because there is real accountability at the time of the race. On average, the FT Cares Development Director and Superintendent of Marketing and Special Events exchange an email a week in the off-season and multiple emails a day beginning about 60 days prior to the event.

STEP 4 **SET BOUNDARIES.** A partner is not an employee and vice versa. This relationship can sometimes become blurry. In the eyes of some nonprofits, the park district has a large workforce. It is important to set boundaries of what the district is willing to do and not do in the established roles set forth when the partnership is formed. There are certain partners who have less access to sponsors, technology, or manpower, but ultimately each side must perform equally to make it work. Although districts could likely handle special events on their own with their own team of marketing, recreational, administrative, financial, and park-services professionals, the amount of time staff members must dedicate could force them to abandon other responsibilities.



STEP 5 GROW SLOW TO FORECAST STRUGGLES.

The Wheaton Park District has been utilizing the partnership model for nearly 10 years. Newer partners have seen the model and its successes and may expect that type of revenue and growth immediately. It is important when working with partnerships and special events in general that a steady growth pace is established. This keeps the partnership honest and revenue in the black. Each year, the Light the Torch Night Run has grown by approximately 10 percent in registration. Over the years, amenities have been added and new features have been tested. For example, last year a laser light show at the finish line of the race was implemented. This was a huge expense so adding it in year one would have sent the event into the red, but forecasting properly for growth is important in establishing a strong and long-lasting, special-event partnership.



STEP 6 STAY FOCUSED ON THE IMPACT.

Planning and executing a special event is hard work, but if both sides are focused on the result, it will be a success. In 2017, the Light the Torch Night Run raised more than \$47,000. Half of the proceeds went to the park district, of which 75 percent (approximately \$6,000 each) was donated to the three internal foundations: DuPage County Historical Museum Foundation, Cosley Zoo Foundation, Inc., and the Play For All Playground and Garden Foundation. The FT Cares Foundation’s proceeds were distributed to four other nonprofit organizations: CASA of Kane County, Hundred Club of Dupage, Pediatric Brain Tumor Foundation, and VOICES of September 11. It is rewarding to know that our special events are changing lives across the community, county, state, and nation. The Wheaton Park District already does great things within the town we serve, and special-event partnerships take the events to a higher level of impact. **PRB**



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To comment on this article, visit ParksAndRecBusiness.com



"Loved the families along route with exterior lighting and cheering."
- Light the Torch Participant



"Thank you for everything the Wheaton Park District does to make our community a fun and special place to live!"
- Taste of Wheaton Attendee

CREATE.DISCOVER.PLAY.



"The energy was **infectious!**"
- Fun Run in Color Participant



"Many thanks to our Wheaton Park District. Director, Board and all staff for their **super hard work!**"
- Independence Day Attendee

LOOKING TOWARDS 2020

The special event team is looking forward to a fun and safe event year. A few changes will include the return of Shakespeare in the Park, the addition of the new Summer Concert Series at Memorial Park and combining Light the Torch Night Run with the DuPage County Historical Museum's October Fest event at Central Athletic Complex.

February 8 | Ice-A-Palooza

April 18 | Fun Run in Color

May 2 | Go Fly A Kite

June 4-7 | Taste of Wheaton

June 26-27 | Summer Concert Series Opening Weekend

July 3-4 | Independence Day Fireworks & Parade

July 10-11 | Summer Concert Series Weekend #2

July 24-25 | Summer Concert Series Weekend #3

August 1 | Wheaton Brew Fest

August 7-8 | Summer Concert Series Weekend #4

August 21-22 | Summer Concert Series Closing Weekend

August 27-29 | Shakespeare in the Park

October 3 | Light the Torch Night Run & October Fest

December 6 | Reindeer Run

Note: Due to concert series, Music Monday event will not take place.

