

Suburban Life

Lorraine McClich editor/477-5450



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Parks

Playgrounds that lure the kid that's in all of us

PARKS SEEM TO bring out the kid in all of us. Visiting a park or playground is an enjoyable way to spend part or all of a day. What follows is a summary of popular playgrounds and parks close to home. Perhaps you'd like to take some time to explore the metropolitan area's all-time favorite playgrounds.

You don't have to be a kid to play in the parks in Farmington and Farmington Hills.

Farmington City Park, Shlawassee at Power, is made up of 18 acres along the Upper Middle Rouge River. In addition to baseball diamonds, the park offers two play areas with swings and slides and an 860-square-foot covered picnic shelter.

Sports fans can take advantage of the two soccer fields and two baseball diamonds in Pioneer Park, on westbound Farmington Road, north of 13 Mile, Farmington Hills. The 15-acre athletic park also offers a picnic area for players.

The two baseball fields named in memory of civic activists Sandy Friedman and Jim Ellis, double as additional soccer fields in the fall. Although many leagues use the facility, it's open to everyone. As with all of the area's parks, Pioneer is open from dawn to dusk.

FAMILY-ORIENTED PROGRAMS are offered during late summer and early fall in Heritage Park on the grounds of the Eleanor Spencer estate, on west Farmington Road, between 10 and 11 Mile, Farmington Hills.

Spicer's arts-and-crafts-style house was built in the 1930s and has been designated a historic residence. Designed by architect Marcus Burrows, it will reopen as a visitors' center in late fall.

Scattered across the 211-acre estate are play and picnic areas, as well as 3.3 miles of nature trails.

Nature classes are conducted 10 a.m. to noon the third Saturday of each month throughout the year. Classes are open to everyone of at least elementary school age. As with all of the park's organized activities, there is a fee. For details, call the Farmington Hills Parks and Recreation Department, 473-9570.

People who aren't residents of Farmington or Farmington Hills will be charged an additional fee. Children ages 5-8 can bring their teddy bears to breakfast 9-10:30 a.m. Saturday, Aug. 5. The same age group can attend a back-to-school breakfast 9:10-30 a.m. Saturday, Sept. 9. Call for reservations.

It's tea time for girls ages 4-7 Saturday, Aug. 12. They're encouraged to dress in the best of mom's or grandmother's cast-off clothes.

From mid-September through October, hayrides will be offered through the trails at Heritage Park.

In West Bloomfield

Although it contains no playground equipment, West Bloom-



Thistles bloom along the River Trail in Heritage Park.

field's Bloomer Park, on Richardson just east of Haggerty, will host a day of "Puppets in the Park" Tuesday, Aug. 15. Showtime is 1 p.m. and the rain date is the same time, Thursday, Aug. 17.

The West Bloomfield Community Sports Park, on Keith north of Commerce, has a small, sand-based children's play area with a wooden play structure that holds tunnels, a chain ladder and a winding slide. The park also has several ball diamonds, a concession stand and soccer fields.

Bloomfield Knolls, on Hebert north of Greer, and Sylvan Manor Park on Woodrow Wilson south of Orchard Lake, offer pleasant neighborhood getaways with play equipment geared toward preschool-aged children.

In Southfield

The star of great playgrounds in Southfield is Inglenook Park, a relatively new facility on 12 Mile between Lahser and Evergreen.

Southfield is also the home of Beechwoods Center, which has wood play structures and excellent climbing areas for children. Lahser Woods Park has a nature center that's popular with visitors. John Grace Community Center is a new playground facility that's also a popular place to visit.

In Livonia

Livonia has 57 developed and undeveloped park sites within its boundaries, not to mention a portion of Hines Park that includes Newburgh Lake. It's one of its earliest developed parks that bring in children.

For the younger set, there are the standard swings and slides, plus such play toys as the climbing rails and merry-go-round.

While it doesn't have permanent restrooms, parents will be glad to know that there are portable toilets at the park. More permanent facilities are across the street at Ford Field, site of baseball diamonds and the Eddie Edgar Ice Arena.

Plymouth-Canton

Parks large, small and in-between dot the area, giving fun-seekers plenty of places to go. The ever-popular Maybury State Park is also nearby, west of Northville on Eight Mile.

Griffin Park can be reached from Canton Center Road or Sheldon in Canton. The park is north of Cherry Hill although there's no access for cars on Cherry Hill.

Griffin Park includes playground areas, a picnic pavilion, baseball diamonds, softball fields, volleyball court, tennis courts and basketball courts.

Plymouth Township Park is on Ann Arbor Trail at McClumpha in Plymouth Township. It includes picnic pavilions, a playground area and baseball diamonds. In the winter many children go sledding in the park.

Sculptor Peter Rockwell came to Plymouth in 1985 to create a whimsical play sculpture in Plymouth Township Park, which is near the park's playground area.

Downtown Plymouth is home to Kellogg Park, at Ann Arbor Trail and Main. The park is the site of Plymouth Fall Festival and summertime concerts presented by the Plymouth Community Band and the Plymouth Community Arts Council.

In Westland

The city of Westland has 17 city parks and the always-popular Hines Park, which winds through the northern portion of the community. The hidden jewel when it comes to entertaining youngsters, however, is Taitan Park, on Carlson just south of Ford Road.

It's literally a children's park, with a merry-go-round, rocking horses, Tot Town and a seven-house play area. Developed in the late 1970s, the park has a rustic appearance with split-rail fencing to set it off from its 110-acre neighbor, Central City Park. It also has a pavilion that is used for many of the city's parks and recreation department summer programs.

It's a short walk over a wooden bridge to Central City Park and its tennis courts, a baseball diamond, a physical fitness trail with exercise stations, and a small lake where small fry have been known to catch one or two fish. The lake also attracts wild ducks and Canada geese, neither of which oppose free hand-outs from park visitors.

If it's hot outside, a session of open



Heritage Park, the newest of Farmington Hills' parks, has been a popular place for picnics since its opening.

swimming at the Bailey Recreation Center's outdoor pool can provide a cool-off to end the excursion. For information, call 722-7520.

In Garden City

Garden City has nine parks, in addition to the county's meandering Hines Park. City Park, on the northeast corner of Merriman and Cherry Hill, is the best bet for spending a day communing with nature or just having fun.

Youngsters can enjoy playing on the playground, stocked with swings, a jungle gym, slide and merry-go-round. Children can then cool off over lunch in the picnic grove or at the pavilion. The picnic area comes complete with grills, a good invitation to an afternoon or evening barbecue.

There are also always-important restrooms, ball diamonds and horseshoe pits, not to mention swimming and wading pools. The pools have

Staff photos by Randy Borst

open swimming 1-3:45 p.m. and 5:30-8:15 p.m. For information, call 525-8846.

Redford Township

Redford Township has three major parks, numerous small recreation areas set up for ballplaying and two Wayne County parks — Lola Valley and Ball Creek.

The standout when it comes to entertaining youngsters is Capitol Park, a hidden park in terms of finding it. Capitol Park is at Capitol and Hemingway, between 4-98 and Plymouth Road. To get there, it's best to take Beech Daly south to Capitol, head west on Capitol and keep driving to the park.

The sprawling park offers one of the best baseball diamonds in the area, according to township parks and recreation staffers. It offers six tennis courts for budding Chris Everts, a concession stand and a children's play area for the swings-and-slides set.

For information, call 937-2727.

Birmingham -Bloomfield

The Birmingham-Bloomfields can't compete with the likes of Southfield. But they do hold their share of scenic parks with picnic areas, some with enough play equipment to keep the little ones occupied for an hour or two.

Beverly Hills Village Park on Beverly between Evergreen and Southfield boasts the largest array of play equipment. With a large pavilion adjacent to the play area, it could make a pleasant family picnic site.

The playground has swings (for infants as well as the older children), a large sandbox, monkey bars, jungle gyms, slides, a merry-go-round and two climbing wooden play structures that hold slides, tunnels and many other features to keep children exploring.

Beverly Hills Park also boasts a sand-covered volleyball court, tennis courts and baseball diamonds.

IN BIRMINGHAM, Shaln Park offers a play area for children as well

as the atmosphere of the city's downtown.

Fembrook Park between Buckingham and Windermere has a large open play area as well as playground equipment.

If your children enjoy feeding the ducks, Birmingham's Quanton Lake Park, north of Maple between Lake-side and Lake Park, is a good bet as well as a nice place for a picnic.

In Troy

Troy has 14 neighborhood parks. Boulton Park, Jaycee Park and Raintree Park are three of the most popular.

All three have open air picnic shelters, which may be reserved for \$20. Reservations must be made in person at the Parks and Recreation office in the Troy Community Center, 540 W. Big Beaver. Of the group using the shelter, at least 75 percent must be Troy residents or employed full time in Troy.

Also popular is Troy's outdoor nature preserve, the Lloyd S. Stage Outdoor Education Center. For information, call 524-3484.

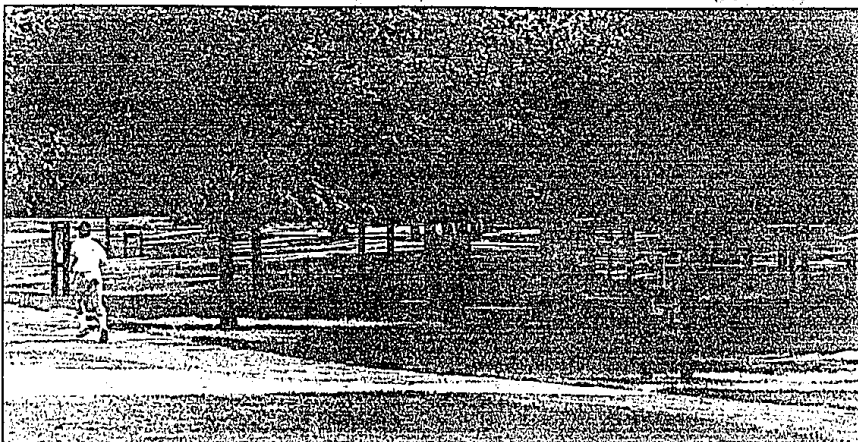
Facilities at the 65-acre Boulton Park include three ball diamonds, eight tennis courts, three full-size soccer fields, two sand volleyball courts, two picnic shelters, play structures and various play equipment. The park entrance is on Crooks, south of Wattles.

Jaycee Park's 45 acres include a sand volleyball court, picnic shelter, two ball diamonds, two soccer fields and two play structures.

The 41-acre wooded Raintree Park includes a nine-hole disc golf course, a ball diamond, soccer field, play structure and picnic shelter. The playground has swings (for infants as well as the older children), a large sandbox, monkey bars, jungle gyms, slides, a merry-go-round and two climbing wooden play structures that hold slides, tunnels and many other features to keep children exploring.

There is free admission to the center, which is open 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Tuesday through Saturday, and noon to 8 p.m. Sunday in the summer.

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In Shlawassee Park a runner uses the trail that surrounds the 14 exercise stations.