

City officials act to make sure nobody hogs the fun at Kids World



STAFF PHOTO BY BILL BAKER

Family fun: Kids World PlayScape so far has been a big hit with area families.

BY TIM SMITH
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Now that Kids World PlayScape officially is up and available for use, Farmington city officials want to make sure the facility isn't monopolized by anyone.

During Tuesday's council meeting, a list of rules was approved. Also the council established rates for those wishing to reserve the Kids World pavilion, limiting reservations to two-hour blocks per day for groups and individuals.

The cost to reserve the pavilion is \$15 per hour for residents of Farmington and Farmington Hills or \$20 per hour for non-residents, up to two hours per reservation. Farmington-Farmington Hills non-profit groups are exempted.

Those interested in reserving the pavilion must do so at city hall, 23600 Liberty Street.

FARMINGTON CITY COUNCIL

Farmington City Manager Frank Lauhoff said the hourly rate to use the pavilion will help offset the actual cost of maintenance and cleanup of that area.

Rules and regulations mirror those for the other picnic pavilion in the east end of Shiloh Park, said Mandy Stirling, chair of the Farmington Planning Commission and an active member of the playscape development committee.

"There are two sets of rules, one for the pavilion and one for (Kids World)," Stirling said. "Both of those are meant to help make it a good place for everyone to visit."

And many people have been visiting the playscape since the Aug. 25 dedication ceremony. "From what I understand, it's

been a packed house every day," Stirling added. "Everyone's enjoying" the playscape. "It's a real good addition to the city of Farmington."

The Kids World committee and city officials concurred that pavilion visits be regulated in terms of length.

In his recommendation to council, Lauhoff said, "Since this area is not designed for long-term picnics and large groups, the shorter reservation time should be adequate. At the same time it will assure that the pavilion isn't monopolized ... by select groups or individuals."

Lauhoff, during an interview last week, emphasized that the playscape, itself, would remain open to everyone during periods when the pavilion is reserved.

Conversely, when the pavilion isn't booked, it is open for all playscape users, Lauhoff said.

Here are rules for Kids World

Kids World PlayScape rules:

- Parent or adult supervision is required
- No unattended children allowed
- No animals or pets
- No smoking
- No glass containers
- No cleated shoes or spikes
- No pushing or shoving
- No bicycles, rollerblades or skateboards
- Everyone must share equipment appropriately
- Keep the playscape clean
- Kids World PlayScape closes at dark



STAFF PHOTO BY BILL BAKER

Live wile: Farmington Hills City Naturalist Joe Derek shows one of the live traps residents may be using illegally to nab critters and relocate them in the wild. Residents often need DNR permits to use such devices.

Trap rap

Permit needed to catch critters

BY LARRY O'CONNOR
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Live traps are not always the answer when dealing with a ravenous raccoon or smelly skunk, a naturalist says.

Residents using such contraptions to rid animals from their property creates other problems.

For one, the Department of Natural Resources require people get a fur trapping or animal nuisance permits to use live traps, which are sold at hardware and sporting goods stores.

Such traps, which also ensnare household pets - can only be used within 450 feet of the house.

Once they catch vermin DNR mandates they be released immediately or destroyed.

"The law is very clear on it," said Sgt. Tom Lennox, DNR conservation officer. "They are not allowed to transport them to other areas."

"That's definitely a no-no. They're spreading their problem to someone else usually."

However, many take animals to the nearest wooded area.

While seemingly humane, such dumping upsets the natural balance, Farmington Hills naturalist Joe Derek said.

Actually, the animal may get killed by another or starve, Derek said.

"There's not enough food in one location," Derek said. "There is a volume of what food and water is available. All these animals can't live happily ever after there, (but) that's what people think."

For instance, woodchucks are territorial. They will fight with another woodchuck for space, usually kicking one out of the woods and right back to the residential area.

A concentration of breeds could foster the spread of diseases.

The DNR gets complaints about nuisance animals, mostly skunks and woodchucks. Property owners will go through licensed private companies or apply for nuisance animal damage permit.

A license is not needed to deal with raccoons, which are causing damage.

In general, "unless it's around their house, live traps are not acceptable," said Lennox.

Use of live traps without a permit could result in fines ranging \$85-\$200, depending on the jurisdiction, Lennox said.

Part of the solution is residents learning to live with nature.

Some residents phone Derek to seek remedies for birds flying overhead to skunks traipsing across their lawns.

"You've just got to learn to live with them," Derek said. "When I was a kid, we never thought about moving a squirrel. I get calls all the time. If they're eating out of your garden, put up a fence or plant different types of flowers."

"(People) want to live in a natural area, but they don't want to tolerate nature when it bothers them."

DNR's Lennox agrees. "We do notice as the area grows, there is more and more conflict between humans and animals," Lennox said. "Usually the humans win out."



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