



# NEWS RELEASE

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## **COUNTY PARKS SET RECORD ATTENDANCE WHILE MAINTAINING PANDEMIC SAFETY**

*Parks staff work to ensure parks, programs remain safe*

**ST. CHARLES COUNTY, MO** – Despite limiting program participants and postponing some events because of the COVID-19 pandemic, St. Charles County Parks already has had a record year for attendance. The County's 17 parks surpassed the 3 million mark at the end of August, and in July, topped the previous record high set last year at more than 2.5 million.

"While other parks in the region have closed, we have remained open," says County Executive Steve Ehlmann. "We have had very few issues with people not complying with our requests to social distance and they appreciate our extra efforts to ensure their safety. Our park programmers have designed or changed classes and events to accommodate social distancing and our park workers have done an excellent job of ensuring visitors social distance by monitoring and restricting the number of visitors to popular park areas. I greatly appreciate their continued efforts to keep residents and visitors as safe as possible."

With nearly 4,000 acres of St. Charles County parkland, there is plenty of space for people to enjoy the outdoors while maintaining appropriate distance from others. Outdoor shelters have remained open, and when people make reservations, they are reminded to take precautions. Indoor venues require renters to fill out a special form that outlines their plan for use during the pandemic. Events and activities are monitored by Park Rangers, St. Charles County Police and park maintenance staff. Additional precautionary measures include cleaning all bathrooms in every park multiple times daily; drinking fountains are closed until further notice.

The addition of three new parks in 2018 have contributed greatly to the increase in visitors this year, as they did in 2019. In August 2018, the Parks Department opened Riverside Landing, a 7.73-acre park with river access located between Kampville Drive and Huster Road in St. Charles, and in September 2018, opened The Park at New Melle Lakes, a 153-acre former golf course in New Melle that offers fishing, kayaking and canoeing, disc golf, trails and more. In October 2018, the 120-acre Veterans Tribute Park opened in Weldon Spring, offering a destination playground for children of all abilities, the Veterans Memorial Garden, and fishing, trails, a dog park, and shelters.

"Nature is comforting, and it provides people with the ability to disconnect and decompress," says Ryan Graham, Director of St. Charles County Parks. "We have received a lot of positive feedback over the last several months. Many visitors are finding our parks for the first time, and we've heard from others who visited before but didn't realize all we have to offer."

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While Veterans Tribute Park continues to be the most visited park in the system, the Parks Department reports that camping at Klondike Park in Augusta, and Indian Camp Creek in Foristell, has been extremely popular this year with people opting for “stay-cations” rather than traveling. This summer, water activities on lakes at Klondike, The Park at New Melle Lakes, and Broemmelsiek Park in Defiance, were popular ways to endure the pandemic. Other popular outdoor spots in St. Charles County parks include The Historic Daniel Boone Home in Defiance and the Youth Activity Park in Dardenne Prairie, home to the largest asphalt pump track in the nation.

“It’s extremely important for people to have these outlets,” says St. Charles County Director of Public Health Demetrius Cianci-Chapman. “The pandemic has kept us away from our families and friends and being able to do a lot of the things we love to do. Taking away the open space people need in order to feel some relief from the pandemic is not good for our health.

“Mentally,” Cianci-Chapman continues, “being able to get fresh air can help us emotionally. This pandemic is stressful and being able to walk or run and just be in an open space can make a huge difference in our mental attitudes. Physically,” he says, “it’s important to exercise. Studies suggest that engaging in physical activity regularly may be beneficial in protecting the body and limiting damage caused by COVID-19. Our parks offer the perfect opportunity to address our mental and physical well-being.”

The County forecasts the parks will reach the 4 million visitors by the end of the year.

“One aspect of the Parks Department’s vision is to promote the high quality of life that exists in St. Charles County. This, perhaps, has never been as important as at this time,” Ehlmann says. “And while reaching record numbers are important statistics to keep so our taxpayers know we are using their dollars wisely, those numbers are not nearly as important as providing safe, clean, open spaces at a time when we all need them the most.”

For information on St. Charles County Parks, visit [stccparks.org](http://stccparks.org) or call 636-949-7535.

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### **About St. Charles County:**

*Founded in 1812, St. Charles County is one of the fastest growing counties in Missouri, and the state’s third largest county in both population and economic share. It is home to 17 scenic county parks encompassing nearly 4,000 acres and additional land under development and more in reserve for future development.*

*With a population of 395,504, St Charles County is home to large employers including General Motors, Citi, MasterCard Worldwide and Boeing. It is ranked among the top 25 counties in the nation in high-tech job growth by the Progressive Policy Institute and consistently has the lowest unemployment rate in the Metropolitan St. Louis area.*

*St. Charles County Government employs nearly 1,100 in more than 30 departments and offices, who work to make the county an excellent place to live, work and shop. For more information, please visit [sccmo.org](http://sccmo.org).*