

Expanded playground adds to Parks & Recreation offerings...

Youngsters are climbing and sliding and thoroughly enjoying the \$50,000 playground expansion at Highland Park. The size of the existing playground was tripled, a new surface was installed and more playground equipment was added. The expanded playground is the latest major improvement at Highland Park, following the renovations at the Dentzel Carousel House, which had its grand re-opening this year. The rare and beloved carousel is once again hosting tours, parties and visitors from around the world.

Northeast Park, home to softball and soccer players, is now a tennis Mecca as well. The 10 new courts and a clubhouse, which includes a shower room and meeting space, are managed by our new tennis pro. He is under contract to develop tennis leagues, bring tournaments to Meridian and promote the tennis center.

The Parks & Recreation calendar is always full. The first-ever Creative Pumpkin Contest sparked children's

creativity, then, as the holidays approached, our staff donned Santa's helpers hats to serve hot chocolate and cookies during the Christmas Tree Lighting at City Hall and the annual Downtown Holiday Parade. Other events during the year included the Sweetheart Run at Bonita Lakes; the NFL Gatorade



LOADING PRODUCE AT THE QUEEN & CRESCENT RAIL YARD WAS HARD WORK AT THE TURN OF THE CENTURY. FOR RECREATION, MERIDIANITES OF 1900 FLOCKED TO THE ANNUAL MISSISSIPPI FAIR AND LIVESTOCK EXPOSITION AT TODAY'S HIGHLAND PARK. THE FAIR FEATURED EXHIBITS OF PRIZE LIVESTOCK, COWS, PIGS AND CHICKENS, AS WELL AS CANNED GOODS, FRESH VEGETABLES AND COLORFUL QUILTS.

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Punt, Pass and Kick competition; the Easter Egg Hunt; the Sonny Montgomery Mystery Doubles Tennis Tournament; and the summer youth program at Velma Young Park.

At our community centers, diversity is the key to a program that attracts participants with wide-ranging interests. From karate to knitting, yoga to cake decorating, ceramics to sign language and bridge to quilting, classes reach young and old, including those with special needs.

The always growing athletic program got another boost when Meridian was named as the site for the Amateur Softball

Association Girls 16 and Under National Tournament in 2001. Getting ready for that big tournament, plus constantly maintaining all the city's ball fields and other facilities, has put a strain on the Grounds Maintenance Division, which hopes to be boosted by additional manpower in the next year.

The long summer drought parched Lakeview Golf Course, but a good irrigation system and a hard-working crew kept the course in shape. Golfers certainly didn't seem to mind. More than 29,000 rounds of golf were played this year, with healthy increases in ladies and juniors play.



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TEN NEW TENNIS COURTS AND A CLUBHOUSE, MANAGED BY THE CITY'S NEW TENNIS PRO, ARE NOW GETTING GOOD USE AT NORTHEAST PARK (TOP PHOTO AND PHOTO ON THE RIGHT). LEFT, THE SENIOR CITIZENS CENTER CONTINUES TO OFFER A WIDE VARIETY OF PROGRAMS.