



The Columbus Park Foundation Impact Report



A Message from the Foundation

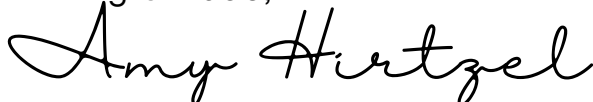
Last November, *The Centennial Variety Show Spectacular* filled Donner Shelter's stage with musicians, poets, and performers of all ages. The shimmering tinsel, glow of stage lights and nostalgic scent of buttered popcorn made the evening feel like a glimpse into Donner Variety Shows of decades past. An event open to all, it was held in a place that hosted neighborhood gatherings for one hundred years and embodied the spirit that makes Columbus so special.

While events like that are highlights for many, I'd like to call attention to other Parks and Rec offerings, albeit with a bit less fanfare: a publicly accessible Olympic-length lap pool; the only surviving Long Truss covered bridge in Indiana; a cemetery with headstones dating back to the Civil War; free (yes, free) kids summer programming through *Come Out & Play*; adaptive aquatic time for neighbors with disabilities through *Swim Buddies*; youth sports leagues; adult sports leagues; a skate park; a dog park; an ice skating rink... I could go on.

Indeed, there is much to boast about when it comes to Columbus Parks and Recreation. The CPF Board holds great respect for what our predecessors have put in place and feel an equally large responsibility to not only sustain the financial bridge between municipal funding and public need, but to thoughtfully shape what comes next. Three park master planning processes are on the horizon. These are generational opportunities to define public spaces for decades to come. At the same time, demand for Youth Scholarships is growing rapidly—offering another avenue to invest in our community's future through the families that comprise it.

When you read this report, I hope you see the important role that Parks & Rec plays in strengthening the very fabric of public life in Columbus and choose to show your support through the Columbus Park Foundation. The next chapter of our parks is being written right now. Help us shape the story!

With gratitude,



Amy Hirtzel, President, Columbus Park Foundation



About the Columbus Park Foundation

Established in 1988, the Columbus Park Foundation is dedicated to enhancing the quality of life for our community members by supporting the Columbus Parks and Recreation Department. The Foundation serves as a vital philanthropic partner, raising funds to ensure that the city's parks, trails, and recreational programs remain accessible, inclusive, and top-rated for all community members.

Community Impact

The Columbus Park Foundation bridges the gap between public funding and community needs through fundraising. Alongside corporate and individual donor programs, we host community events like the Tour de Trails series and Yoga and Mimosas. These efforts allow the Foundation to support high-impact projects and maintain our community amenities, such as our green spaces and trails. Through its dedicated volunteer Board of Directors and generous donors, the Foundation continues to make Columbus an inviting and connected place to live.



Our mission and vision



Our Mission



Through philanthropic support, we cultivate sustainable, vibrant community spaces and accessible programming with the Columbus Parks and Recreation Department.

Our Vision

The Foundation fosters sustainable, vibrant, and accessible community spaces and programs through four key pillars:

Health and Wellness

Promoting physical fitness by supporting comprehensive recreational programs and facilities.

Inclusivity

Ensuring community activities are open to everyone by actively funding and championing initiatives that empower people of all ages and abilities to connect and play.

Preservation

Investing in the maintenance and protection of local green spaces and historic sites, such as the City Cemetery, for future generations.

Infrastructure Support

Providing funding for the development of 12 playgrounds, 24 parks, 12 facilities, and the extensive People Trail System, which includes over 23 miles of multi-use trails.

Meet our board members

The Columbus Park Foundation Board is the driving force behind our mission to ensure that top-rated parks, trails, and programs remain accessible to every member of our community. Composed of passionate volunteers, the Board provides the oversight and leadership necessary to bridge the gap between basic city services and an exceptional park system.

A Legacy of Stewardship

Our board members are active advocates who dedicate their professional skills, ranging from financial management to community outreach, to protect our green spaces for future generations. Each member is committed to attending monthly meetings, serving on specialized committees, and making a personal financial contribution to the Foundation.

2025-2026 Board Members

Amy Hirtzel, *President*, Provides overall leadership and vision for Foundation initiatives

(open position), *Vice-President*, Leads strategic growth and long-term planning efforts

Michael Burdekin, *Treasurer*, Manages fiscal health and ensures donations are used for their intended impact

Eric Riddle, *Secretary*, Oversees communications and keeps our community records transparent

Heather Baker, *Board Member*

Joel Philippsen, *Board Member*

David Hayward, *Lifetime Member*

Chuck Wilt, *Lifetime Member*

Join the Mission

The CPF Board is growing! If you are passionate about making our community more sustainable, accessible, and vibrant, consider joining the Foundation Board. Visit cbusinparks.com/cpfboard to fill out an interest form.



The impact of your generosity

Your donations have been directly reinvested into the spaces and experiences that make Columbus home.

Enhancing Shared Spaces

We believe high-quality facilities foster a sense of pride and belonging. Your donations allowed us to make these improvements:

Park Operations: From the installation of additional **pet waste stations** to replacing **swing chains**, we are committed to keeping parks functional, clean, and welcoming.

The Circle K Fieldhouse: We invested in **specialized equipment** to maintain the longevity of our indoor turf.

Investing in the Future

We are dedicated to being good stewards of our community's health and future.

Aquatic Safety: We prioritized swimmer safety by purchasing new **lifeguard rescue tubes**, **backboards**, and specialized **training mannequins** for staff.

The Power of Produce program: This provides kids with vouchers for fresh fruits and vegetables at the Farmer's Market, helping the next generation make healthy choices.

Fostering Play and Recreation

Recreation is more than just fun; it's about building skills and creating memories. Your gifts have brought new energy to our programs.

Youth Activities:

We replaced aging equipment with 9 Square in the Air sets, provided skate replacements at HCCIA and gave new soccer balls to youth leagues, ensuring kids have the tools they need to play.

Community Events:

Your support funded the 2025 *Movie in the Park* series - including a brand-new wind-rated 20ft movie screen!

Inclusive Opportunities:

You help bring inclusive programming, like Swim Buddies, straight to our community. Your support also funds ADA-accessible playground features and pool equipment.

Giving your time



Friends of the Parks

The Columbus Park Foundation's mission is to ensure that community spaces and accessible programming remain available to every community member. In 2025, our mission was brought to life by dedicated volunteers who donated a combined **4,316 hours of service**, providing the essential human capital required to maintain our high-caliber parks and diverse recreational offerings.

These volunteer hours were strategically directed toward 4 areas of impact:

Environmental Stewardship & Sustainability

Volunteers engaged in critical ecological restoration by removing invasive species throughout the Columbus Parks system. These efforts protect our local natural landscapes and ensure the long-term health of our green spaces for future generations.

Youth Development & Mentorship

By serving as coaches for youth sports, volunteers provide valuable mentoring to children ages 4 to 18. These programs foster teamwork, leadership, and healthy lifestyles, helping to build a more connected and active community.

Civic Honor & Remembrance

In a profound display of community respect, volunteers coordinated the placement and collection of American flags on veterans' graves for the annual Memorial Day Observance. This tradition serves as a heartfelt tribute to those who served, ensuring their sacrifices are honored at our City Cemetery.

Inclusive & Adaptive Programming

Our commitment to building a community where everyone belongs was strengthened through volunteer support for adaptive sports. Volunteers assisted differently-abled participants in adaptive programs like Soccer Buddies and Basketball Buddies, providing the one-on-one "buddy" support necessary for an inclusive athletic experience.

Your gift in action



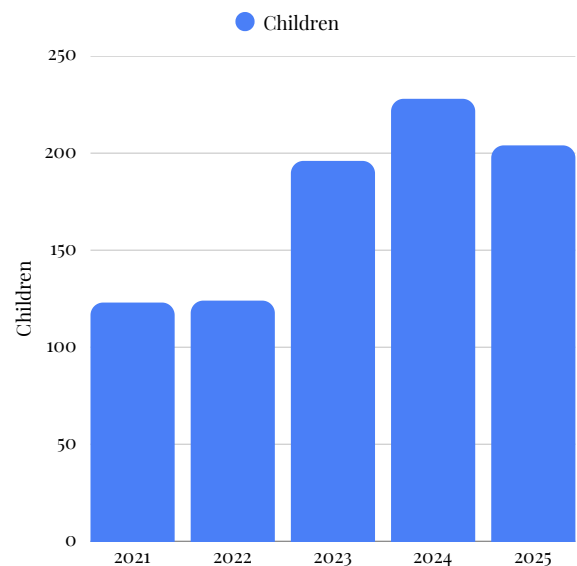
Chuck Wilt Youth Scholarship

For some families in Bartholomew County, costs to participate in programs can be an impossible barrier. You are changing that.

Your support for the **Chuck Wilt Youth Scholarship** has ensured that children in our community never hear “no” simply because of financial constraints. Because of your generosity, each child can receive **up to \$200** per calendar year to discover their potential through:

- **Life-saving skills** in swimming lessons
- **Confidence building** on the ice or in gymnastics
- **Lifelong Friendships** formed during day camps and youth sports leagues

of Children Using the Chuck Wilt Youth Scholarship



2025 Impact at a Glance

Donors empowered 204 children to participate in 399 different activities, ensuring they didn't miss out on the experiences that shape a healthy childhood.

A “Yes” for Every Child:

Your donations directly fund registration for all Columbus Parks and Recreation programs.

Community Strength:

By removing financial barriers, you are helping build a more vibrant and inclusive Bartholomew County.

204
children

399
activities

Thank you for saying “yes” to our community’s youth.

Your past gift has given a child the chance to explore their passion.

Community connection



Celebrating 100 Years of Community

In November 2025, the Columbus Park Foundation partnered with the Columbus Rotary Club, News Talk 1010 WCSI, and Little Local Life to revive a century-old community tradition. *The Centennial Variety Show Spectacular* successfully honored the dual 100th anniversaries of the historic Donner Park Shelter and the Columbus Rotary Club.



Honoring Community Leadership

A central highlight of the event was a tribute to Tom Pickett, a foundational figure in both the local music scene and civic leadership. Recognized as the oldest living former president of the Columbus Rotary Club, Pickett's presence bridged the dual centennial celebrations of the Rotary and the historic Donner Park Shelter. For nearly a quarter of a century, Pickett organized, booked, and sustained the annual summer variety shows. His efforts transformed the Donner Park Shelter into an accessible, open-air stage for amateur musicians, performers, and local talent.



Thank you to our event sponsors:



Make your mark with parks



In 2025, through the support of the Columbus Park Foundation, the Columbus Parks and Recreation Department launched “Drawn Together”, an interactive traveling mural under the “Make Your Mark with Parks” campaign. Designed by local artist Abigal Flout of AbFlo Creative, the massive black-and-white canvas features a stylized map of Columbus’s park system, highlighting iconic landmarks and activities like the Donner Aquatic Center, Mill Race Park, and The Commons.

The mobile mural continues to travel to parks, community centers, and seasonal events where residents of all ages are invited to color in sections of the artwork. By turning public art into a hands-on, shared experience, “Drawn Together” engages hundreds of citizens, fostering deep community pride and lifelong stewardship for our public spaces.



Legacy in motion

The Future of the Columbus Park Foundation

As we look toward the future of our organization, the Foundation is shifting from a model of immediate need to one of **permanent legacy**. Our vision for the future is built on the pillars: **Sustainability, Accessibility, Vibrancy, and Stewardship**.

Sustainability: Reaching the \$375,000 Milestone

The centerpiece of our future is the Chuck Wilt Youth Scholarship Endowment. By reaching our \$375,000 fundraising goal, we can ensure that financial support for local families isn't dependent on the success of a single year's events. The endowment will act as a "forever fund", generating the interest needed to say "yes" to every child who wants to play, swim, or learn - in perpetuity.

Vibrancy: Reimagining Our Icons

The next chapter of our story includes the transformation of landmark facilities. Our focus now turns to the Donner Park Master Plan and Mill Race Park Master Plan. Looking ahead, the Foundation will support the fundraising needed to modernize these parks and their facilities, like the Donner Aquatic Center.

Stewardship: A Greener Tomorrow

The future of our parks is also an environmental one. We are committed to supporting our city's tree canopy, protecting native plant species, and expanding pollinator parks and green spaces. By investing in green infrastructure today, we are protecting the air, water, and natural beauty for generations to come.

Accessibility: Expanding The People Trail Network

The People Trail is a staple of our community. The future of the Foundation involves aggressive expansion and maintenance of this resource. We aren't just adding miles; we are bridging gaps between neighborhoods, schools, and workplaces to ensure that Columbus remains one of the most walkable and bikeable cities in the Midwest.

Every dollar donated stays local. Every dollar builds a legacy.

Visit www.cbusinparks.com/donate to donate today.

By the Numbers



The Columbus Park Foundation helps keep activities accessible for everyone. In 2025, we provided **over \$60,000** to the Columbus Parks and Recreation Department to ensure programs remain free or low-cost. Here's how your support made a difference:

Movies in the Park:

Families gathered at Mill Race Park all summer long to enjoy popular films under the stars - completely free of charge.

Power of Produce:

We're helping kids eat healthy! Every Saturday at the Columbus Farmer's Market, children received \$2 vouchers to spend on fresh fruits and veggies from local vendors.

Come Out and Play:

Our longest-running free recreation program. Kids earn "Park Bucks" for good citizenship, which they can spend at the Come Out and Play store. Each child also receives a free pair of shoes.

Columbus Park Foundation Fund Overview

Fund	Balance
Main Fund	\$1,163,811
Chuck Wilt Youth Scholarship Fund	\$44,395
Endowment Fund	\$395,291
John McCormick Scholarship Endowment Fund	\$195,738
Jolie Crider Memorial Fund	\$30,936
People Trail Fund	\$135,638

Through the generosity of our donors, the Foundation provided **\$29,804 in Chuck Wilt Youth Scholarships in 2025**, directly supporting the inclusion of our community's youth. If you compare that single year of utilization to the current balance, you'll see why this is a priority to grow! We are actively pursuing multiple ways to bolster this fund for many years to come, but please consider donating.

A Chuck Wilt Youth Scholarship is worth up to \$200 per child, annually. It can be applied toward participation fees for a variety of Parks & Rec leagues and lessons.

Donate to a fund you care about today!

www.cbusinparks.com/donate

Thank you to our donors



Area of Greatest Need

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Peggy Voelz

Greg Willmore
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Columbus Area Arts Council, Inc.
Heritage Fund - The Community
Foundation of Bartholomew County
Mark & Wendy Elwood Foundation

Chuck Wilt Youth Scholarship

Anonymous
Bill and Sandy Allen
Teresa Almaguer
Jacob Bailey
Luciana Ballesteros
Denise Bodart
Alison Buck
Michael Burdekin
Katie Carlson
Jaelyn Carmer
Linzy Carmer
Reagan Carr
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Supriya Singh
Cindy Smock
Patrick M. Stahley
James Tibbetts
Ben Tylka
Chuck Wilt
Lovins Select Pool and Spa
Russell and Jean Hashman
Endowment Fund
Repp Associates Foundation

City Cemetery

Bartholomew County
Historical Society

Thank you to our donors, continued

Hamilton Community Center and Ice Arena

Harry Bargetmento
Haley Drake
Sarah Fleenor
Shauna Fleenor
Janae Garner-Kelley
Erin Griffin
Megan Johnson
Jose Lopez
Stacy McMullen
Anil Seelamsetty
Lora Sheard
Sarah Slade
Amy Williams
Kroger
LiveBarn Inc.

Inclusive Playgrounds

Grant Gaddis

James K. Baker Trees

Donald Harvey
Gregory Scherschel
City Of Columbus

Memorial Tree/Bench

In Honor of Derek T. Bush
Dawn Doup-Pandit

In Honor of Phil Larson

Maria Larson
John Larson
Elaine Casey
Arnold Bilstad
Leticia Chona
Susan Watterson
Alan Adams
Margaret Luallen
Stephen Brown
Sally Fribley
Anne Marie Alward
Rebecca Wilhelm
Rebecca Sauser

PNC Nancy
Jill Steiner
Robert McWilliams

In Honor of Bill and Kathy Wheeler
Michael and Lorri Frazer

*In Honor of Sharon Catherine
Wilson Klingler*
Daniel Klingler

Mill Race Park

Columbus Running Club

Park and Park Facilities

Kathy Baumgart
Dan Dunham
Columbus Rotary Club

People Trail Fund

Scott Baize
Gary Dismore
Elizabeth Morris
Elliott Nowacky
Catherine Simmons
First Lutheran Church

Recreation and Playground Programs

Tom Ganus
Eric Hendricks
Pam Moffitt

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Family Chiropractic and Wellness
GigabitNow Indiana
JCBank
Kenny Glass, Inc.
Lohmeyer Plumbing, LLC
Justin Schneider
Voelz, Reed & Mount, LLC

The Commons

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Bethany Clotfelter
Yashira Colon
Brett Cruser
Sarah Davis
Ashley DeHart
Katie Dixon
Patty Forbes
Nichristin Guesman
Nancy Malan
Jill Malan-Britt
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Please consider donating to the Columbus Park Foundation.
Help us continue to provide accessible, vibrant and sustainable spaces and programs to the community!

www.cbusinparks.com/donate

Contact Us



812-375-2759



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The Columbus **Park** Foundation