

JUMP INTO SUMMER FUN

Despite a few weather-related construction delays, Freedom Springs Aquatics Park opened to rave reviews and strong attendance support.



By Nicole Van Winkle



Memorial Weekend, the temperature was colder than typical for a summer day, but families were lined up in anticipation for the brand new aquatic park, Freedom Springs, to open its doors for the very first time. Anticipation had been building since 2012 when the local pool closed after a long life of service to the community. City officials viewed the pool closing as an opportunity to build something innovative for the community. They also hoped it would bring additional businesses to the Greenwood, Indiana area. Because the facility includes several waterpark features, City officials contracted with the Counsilman-Hunsaker and the Sports Facility Management team to operate the facility. Through this contract, the management team is responsible for developing the program, hiring and managing the staff, developing and implementing market strategy

and managing daily operations. They work closely with City officials to ensure the community is served well and operations are fiscally sustainable.

A Tour Around Town

Upon entering the facility, guests are welcomed with a beautiful view of the entire park. They can access the restrooms and locker rooms directly adjacent to the entrance and select a complimentary lifejacket to use for the day. Once their personal items are stored, guests can enter the leisure river at the beach entrance and swim or meander in a single or double tube. As guests drift along, they can see the small cabanas available for rent along the outside of the river. Cabanas can be rented for either a full day or half day and rarely go a day without being completely booked. Priced reasonably, guests can enjoy their own, dedicated shade during the hot Indiana summers.



One of the most popular slides at the park is a tube slide that exits directly into the leisure river.

After exiting the leisure river, waterpark guests venture to the top of the two-story slide tower, where they have their pick of two body slides and one tube slide. The tube slide is a guest favorite because after your thrilling plunge down the slide, you exit straight into the leisure river! Connected to the body slide catch pool is a lily pad crossing area. Children and adults alike take on the challenge of balancing their way across the pool holding onto a net rope overhead and the moving lily pads beneath their feet. On either side of the lily pad walk are fiberglass palm trees, creating a beach feel and a great picture opportunity!

The smaller children enjoy the play structure area, complete with sprays, small slides and a tipping bucket that will be sure to drench any unsuspecting bystanders in the 1-foot depth area. Adjacent to the play structure is an area with small sprays and no standing water. Surrounding the children's area are three pavilion shelters

CABANAS CAN BE RENTED FOR EITHER A FULL DAY OR HALF DAY AND RARELY GO A DAY WITHOUT BEING COMPLETELY BOOKED.



FREEDOM SPRINGS AQUATICS PARK

850 WEST STOP 18 ROAD

GREENWOOD, IN 46143

FREEDOMSPRINGS.GREENWOOD.IN.GOV/

OPERATED BY: COUNCILMAN-HUNSAKER AND SPORTS FACILITY MANAGEMENT

OWNERS: CITY OF GREENWOOD, INDIANA

ADMISSION PRICES:

DAY PASS ADMISSION RATES:

GREENWOOD RESIDENT ADULT (18+): \$8

RESIDENT CHILD/SENIOR (55+): \$6

MILITARY DAY PASS: \$6 (WITH VALID MILITARY ID)

NON-RESIDENT ADULT (18+): \$10

NON-RESIDENT CHILD/SENIOR (55+): \$8

INFANTS (0-2): FREE

DATES OPEN: MEMORIAL WEEKEND - LABOR DAY

CAPACITY: 1,500

NUMBER OF EMPLOYEES: YEAR-ROUND: 1; SEASONAL: 75

FUTURE EXPANSION PLANS: ADDING A WAVE POOL WITHIN THE NEXT FEW SEASONS.



Adults and children enjoy challenging themselves on the lily pad walk.



larger groups can rent for the day to celebrate their special occasions.

A guest favorite is the lap pool, which is open for a portion of the day for recreational swimmers. Featuring 1-meter and 3-meter diving boards, the deep end is rarely empty. Before and after operational hours, the lap pool hosts water fitness classes, water walking and swim lessons.

After spending the morning in water fitness classes, spiraling down the slides and getting drenched under the bucket, guests lay out on the chaise lounge chairs and visit the concessions area for a bite to eat. The offerings are reasonably priced and feature the traditional waterpark fare of burgers, nachos, ice cream, chips, candy and pizza.

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SUPPLIERS

DEVELOPMENT/DESIGN: BANNING ENGINEERING
CONSULTANTS:
 RATIO ARCHITECTS; COUNSILMAN-HUNSAKER
CONSTRUCTION: THE SKILLMAN CORPORATION
 (CONSTRUCTION MANAGER); SPEAR CORPORATION
 (POOL CONTRACTOR)
WATERSLIDES: SPLASHTACULAR
CHILDREN'S INTERACTIVE PLAY STRUCTURE:
 VORTEX (PLAY STRUCTURE); PLAYTIME (WATER WALK)
CHILDREN'S EQUIPMENT: VORTEX
POOL AND/OR DECK COATINGS:
 TNEMEC (POOL EPOXY PAINT)
FILTRATION EQUIPMENT: NEPTUNE-BENSON
PUMPS: MARLOW
CHEMICAL: PULSAR
CHEMICAL CONTROLLERS: BECS
ADMISSION SYSTEM: VERMONT SYSTEMS; RECTRAC

FREEDOM SPRINGS CONTINUED FROM PAGE 208

How It Shook Out

The inaugural season has just finished and the end result is spectacular. The Greenwood, Indiana community has embraced Freedom Springs Aquatics Park with open arms! It was projected that the park would see approximately 75,000 guests, which is ambitious for a city of 53,000 residents on a balanced school schedule beginning July 30th. The park was visited by over 77,000 people from Memorial Day through Labor Day. Originally, the food and beverage operation was going to be contracted out separately. The Counsilman-Hunsaker/Sports Facilities Management team took on the challenge of operating the concessions in-house, which generated more revenue than a typical municipal operation using souvenir cups, combo meals and a local pizza shop to encourage customers to eat inside the park.

A robust marketing plan contributed to the success of Freedom Springs Aquatics Park, which consisted of the usual social media, flyers, email blasts, billboard advertising, website optimization and radio. A unique, but extremely effective component of the marketing plan was Freedom Springs' partnership with the local minor league baseball team, the Indianapolis Indians. Serving a similar demographic, placing a billboard in their outfield, pre- and in-game shoutouts via sports radio and game announcer and season ticketholder mailers saturated the game attendees with Freedom Springs information at every turn. To make it more fun, during select games, there was an on-field promotion competition. A fan would run the bases, collecting various aquatics equipment such as goggles, a noodle, towel, etc. Once they completed the challenge, they received a few tickets to Freedom Springs Aquatics Park. This focused the entire stadium's crowd on the advertising message read

The park offers a variety of combo meal options that entice guests to eat in the park when they visit.

aloud by the announcer during the on-field promotion.

Not Just About the Dollars

Above the excellent experience factor is the service and safety side of the operations. Previous to opening, there were severe weather events that caused construction to slow down and threatened to postpone the Memorial weekend grand opening. Because of the delays, staff were trained throughout the week leading up to grand opening. All the staff, from cashiers to lifeguards, stepped up to the plate, working as a team to fill in any gaps with the newness of the operation. City officials ensured that the facility was complete prior to Memorial weekend and then it was up to the staff to ensure the customers had a great experience. Staff did just that by allowing season passholders to enter the facility 15 minutes early each day, being well-informed and answering questions and enforcing rules politely and respectfully. Customers were so excited about the facility that week-day evening hours were added after schools returned to session. Staff and City officials were quick to respond to customer inquiries and feedback in order to provide an exceptional experience for each guest.

Safety is a top priority in the facility, with weekly in-service trainings reinforcing key lifeguarding and communication skills. The staff faced several emergency scenarios their first summer, including a medical emergency requiring CPR. Staff reacted calmly, according to their training, and the guest was revived around the time emergency personnel arrived. Freedom Springs lifeguards and management were applauded on social media for their professional response and care and dubbed the "best lifeguards in the state."

Freedom Springs Aquatic Park experienced an exceptional inaugural season, despite weather closures 15 days of the season. Next season will feature a restructured season pass package offering souvenir cups and food and beverage discounts for the higher level season pass, as well as a food and beverage discount for pavilion shelter rental guests. Marketing and advertising will focus on mediums that allow tracking the return on investment as well as measuring customer loyalty. Staff hiring will be a major focus during the off-season to allow for a longer operating calendar next summer once the high schools are back in session. Anticipated to operate at a loss the first few years, Freedom Springs Aquatics Park ended the season with a surplus, which is very uncommon for a municipal operation! The teamwork between the City officials and management team provided a recipe for success for the Freedom Springs Aquatics Park by providing a balance between community service, 45 years of aquatics experience and business decisions focused on fiscal sustainability. •



NICOLE VAN WINKLE IS AN ACCOUNT EXECUTIVE WITH COUNSILMAN-HUNSAKER, FOCUSING ON FEASIBILITY STUDIES AND FACILITY TRAINING AND MANAGEMENT FOR AQUATIC FACILITIES THROUGHOUT THE NATION. VAN WINKLE ASSISTS NEW AQUATIC FACILITY OPERATORS AND OWNERS WITH PRE-OPENING MANAGEMENT SERVICES, INCLUDING STAFF TRAINING, FACILITY SPECIFIC BUSINESS PLANS AND MARKETING PLANS FOR NEW AQUATIC FACILITIES. SHE ALSO PROVIDES CLIENTS WITH ONGOING FULL-TIME MANAGEMENT SERVICES AND MODEL AQUATIC HEALTH CODE OPERATIONAL AUDITS TO ASSIST WITH SUSTAINABLE OPERATING PRACTICES FOR THE LIFE OF THE FACILITY.