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Brookfield & Elm Grove

THIS MONTH

MAY 2022

Park and rec departments address seasonal staffing shortages

Different municipalities look for people to fill vacancies ahead of summer

By Karen Pilarski
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BROOKFIELD — Many park and recreation departments are facing seasonal staff shortages as summer approaches. Departments are using creativity to try and attract people to fill those vacancies around the county.

"This year has probably been one of the more challenging years for us to find summer seasonal workers," Brookfield Parks Director John Kelliher said.

Brookfield runs a recreation division as well as park maintenance operations. Kelliher said the city needs day camp leaders, tennis instructors and people to cut grass and prepare ball diamonds.

He can't pinpoint one reason for the staffing challenges, but said the pandemic didn't help things.

"It is a ripple effect we have gone through the past couple of years. Being open and closing as well as there aren't as many kids working like they used to," Kelliher said.

He said college and high school students may have other opportunities such as internships, or are busy due to athletics and other activities.

"Kids are getting pulled in many different directions and their ability to work a 40 hour a week job in our parks ... their schedules don't allow them to do it," he said.

See STAFFING, PAGE 4



Waukesha County Parks & Land Use

Different municipalities are using creativity to try and attract people to fill vacancies around the county. Waukesha County is offering training for qualified lifeguard candidates. Pictured is Menomonee Beach.

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Photo provided by Leesa Rodenkirch/Special to the Enterprise

Jason Gillette has been the director of bands at Oconomowoc High School since August 2021. Before being hired at OHS, he served as band director for Brookfield Central High School for 25 years. In January, he and the OHS Bands Program marched at Disney World.

Double time: Longtime band director Gillette moonlights for Skylight’s ‘Raisin’

By Rebecca Seymour
Special to The Freeman

OCONOMOWOC — When Jason Gillette was asked to be a part of the pit orchestra for Skylight Music Theatre’s production of “Raisin,” it was an opportunity he admitted he couldn’t turn down. With its Grammy-winning score adding depth to the story through jazz, gospel, funky blues, and ballads, the musical adaptation of Lorraine Hansberry’s “A Raisin in the Sun” won the Tony Award for Best Musical in 1974.

Two months ago, Gillette signed on to play alto saxophone, soprano saxophone, flute, alto flute, and clarinet for 15 shows, April 8-24, at Skylight’s mainstage Cabot Theatre in Milwaukee’s Third Ward.

During the day, Gillette is the director of bands at Oconomowoc High School, a position he’s held since August 2021. Before then, he was band director for Brookfield Central High School for 25 years.

In addition to his teaching career, the woodwind artist has an impressive list of professional performance experiences, including accompanying Broadway shows featured at the Marcus Performing Arts Center, as well as hitting the stage with his own group, Jason Gillette and the Showtime Big Band.

“I knew I would be burning the candle at both ends, but I believe you have to pursue your passions and feed your soul. Being a part of such a wonderful pit orchestra, cast and crew for ‘Raisin’ was too good to pass up. The story is a powerful one and the music is fantastic!” he said.

On April 14, more than 60 OHS band, choir, and theater students and their teachers took a field trip to attend a matinee of “Raisin” at the Skylight Theatre. Dozens of Gillette’s former Brookfield Central students and colleagues were also in attendance.

“The kids loved it and were most excited about seeing Jason in the pit. It’s great to see a teacher do what he loves outside of teaching as a professional artist,” said OHS theater teacher Tiersa Ferraro.

Eli Miller is a senior and percussionist in the OHS Wind Symphony under Gillette’s direction.



Photograph provided by Greg Garcia/Special to the Enterprise

OHS band director Jason Gillette says he is grateful for the opportunity to play alto sax, soprano sax, flute, alto flute, and clarinet in the pit orchestra for the musical production “Raisin” April 8-24 at Skylight Music Theatre in Milwaukee’s Third Ward.

“It was a great experience for me because I plan to pursue a career in music. I really enjoyed the show, especially the music. I think it’s important for students to see and hear their teacher perform. Knowing that a teacher has professional experience really helps with trust, but also gives students an idea of what careers in music look like,” he said.

“It was a ‘fill the bucket’ experience for me. There definitely was a buzz and I could feel the youthful energy in the theater,” said Gillette. “I’m grateful for the opportunity to collaborate with other professional artists. As a teacher, I can bring these real-life experiences back to the classroom and talk about what it means to pursue a career as a performing artist.”



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THIS MONTH

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Secure package lockers to be offered at The Corners of Brookfield

565 lockers will be available to the public

TOWN OF BROOKFIELD — As people increasingly seek out convenient options for shopping, The Corners of Brookfield announced it is installing 565 secure lockers varying in size for package delivery and storage.

The lockers will occupy 4,700 square feet of space in the mixed-use development's parking garage next to Sendik's at 20190 Lower Union St. The lockers will include 16 temperature-controlled, refrigerated lockers as well as a large package room.

IM Properties, the operator of The Corners, has partnered with Parcel Pending but "adapted its business model via a proprietary software platform to create and introduce 'Premier Parcel,' the first secure delivery locker concept to provide a wide combination of retail, shopper and residential benefits," according to the news release. The new company is called Premier Parcel and is owned by IM Properties.

"The creation and addition of Premier Parcel further emphasizes our mission of creating a town center for our community. It's the modern incarnation of the post office, meant not only to keep your packages secure and provide round the clock convenience, but to allow for a more reliable way for connection between small businesses, retailers and customers," said Robert Gould, head of IM Properties U.S. division and CEO of Brookfield Corners LLC, in a statement.

Premier Parcel at The Corners allows members to ship any items through any courier to the secure lockers. Once it's time for pickup, members receive a notification with a personalized barcode and access number that will give them secure and monitored 24-hours-a-day access to the space and locker. The public can begin to utilize Premier Parcel later this spring.

The Corners of Brookfield is located near the intersection of Bluemound and Barker roads in the Town of Brookfield.



Submitted photo
More than 500 secure lockers will be available to the public for use at The Corners of Brookfield in the underground parking garage.

Staffing

From Page 1A

Kelliher added there is also competition with other employment and a "wage war."

The easiest answer is pay more and get more applicants, according to Kelliher.

"You are seeing that you can work at a restaurant which advertises \$15 a hour. That's pretty good for a part-time job. But they are still looking for people," he said.

Other industries such as food service and retail are raising wages to attract people but they are also experiencing shortages.

"It's not just affecting municipal government and recreation and park agencies. It is affecting the economy as a whole," Kelliher said.

He pointed to stores and restaurants having to close early or switch their hours due to staffing shortages. For municipalities, the vacancies could hinder departments.

"My biggest concern is, if we don't have a lot of people to fill these spots, it could impact our ability to provide the services we are traditionally providing our community," he said.

City of Pewaukee Parks & Recreation Director Nick Phalin said there are extreme difficulties in finding seasonal staff for both the village of Pewaukee and city. They hire parks maintenance workers, summer camp counselors, sports instructors, and lifeguards.

"We have had challenges for a few years but were always able to get to our goal and provide the level of service we expect to provide," he said.

Phalin said he has 25-30 vacancies that need to be filled during May. There are minimal applications coming in.

Phalin, like Kelliher, said it isn't just parks and recreation departments, but the full workforce.

"The workforce is continuing to change and a lot of factors and I don't know which one is true but

there are more factors than there ever have been," Phalin said.

Phalin also added the issue of other places sweetening the pot with increased wages that his department can't offer.

"Another factor is the college and high school workforce, they spend their time differently. Not every kid needs a summertime job anymore," Phalin said.

Emily Heller, public communications coordinator for Waukesha County Parks & Land Use, said every year the county's park system hires 300 seasonal workers. They work in parks, ice arenas, the Waukesha Expo Center, golf courses and as lifeguards at some of the beaches.

"It is always a challenge but particularly this year," Heller said.

She added a potential impact, in terms of lifeguard shortages, is decreasing the hours a swimming beach is open.

Creativity with recruiting

Many municipalities have to get creative instead of relying on

website postings to entice people to apply.

"We are probably putting in more hours into the recruiting process and educating people on opportunities than we ever had to do," Kelliher said.

Human resources departments, department heads and employees are spreading the word to help.

Departments like Kelliher's are also becoming more flexible.

"Instead of let's say hiring two kids to work eight hours a day, if can't fill those eight hour positions, we may be open to some flexibility such as hiring four kids to work four hours a day," he said.

Phalin said they increased the pay wage by \$2 as an added incentive.

"We are hoping, usually college-aged kids, come through the door with applications or go online, but we aren't seeing many applications," he said.

He said his department has been reaching out to multiple school districts and attended

high school job fairs.

"Our human resources departments have been posting on Handshake, Indeed, and other job posting websites," Phalin said.

Heller said every year the county adjusts the pay wage and another perk is the flexibility.

"The work itself attracts people because of the outdoor nature. People like to be outdoors in the summer and that is a great way to do that," Heller said.

For lifeguards, the county is offering training and certification for qualified candidates.

"There is a national shortage for that role specifically. We are focusing on that right now," she said.

Kelliher, Phalin and Heller said a huge bonus is the chance to hone in on workplace skills and add to their resumes.

"We are confident in the culture and work experience you can get," said Heller. "It is a life-long experience you can use moving forward in your career."



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