

68 city parks equal 5,000 acres of summer fun

by LAURI HOPPLE

In need of amusement over the summer months? Why not indulge in an old-time favorite — go parking! That is, take advantage of the recreation available through the Lincoln municipal parks.

Sixty-eight municipal parks are scattered throughout the city, ranging in size from one-tenth acre (mini parks) to 1,455 acres (Wilderness Park.) Together, the 68 parks cover almost 5,000 acres.

Of the 68 parks, only 28 do not offer picnic tables and outdoor grills. All but 19 offer playground equipment.

According to Lincoln Superintendent of Parks Gary Cooper, the most heavily-used parks are Pioneers Park, Holmes Park and Antelope Park.

The 60.7 acres of Pioneers Park has plenty of open space to stake out frisbee-throwing territory. It is located one-half mile south of Van Dorn and Coddington streets.

Pioneers is available for picnics. The park is complete with tables and grills, shelters, drinking fountains and playgrounds. If lunch accidentally got left behind, Pioneers has a concession stand too.

HIKING AND BIKING trails, an 18-hole championship golf course, ball diamonds, bridle paths and flower gardens also can be found at Pioneers.

One feature at Pioneers that is found only in one other Lincoln park — Wilderness Park — is a nature center. Named after Phet Ager, superintendent of parks from 1931 to 1940, the nature center offers guided and independent tours along three miles of trails. The nature center is open daily from 8:30 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Holmes Park at 70th and Van Dorn streets is best known for its lake. The lake provides activities including boating and fishing. Motorboating and swimming are not allowed by the Lincoln Parks and Recreation Department in Holmes or any other city lake.

Holmes Park also has baseball diamonds, hiking and biking trails, bridle trails and an area where dogs can be let loose to enjoy the outdoors. Dogs must be on a leash unless in these designated areas.

The park's 555 acres include flower gardens, an 18-hole golf course, playgrounds and picnic areas.

One special attraction of Holmes Park is the Hyde Memorial Observatory. The building holds up to 50 people and has three permanently mounted telescopes for observing of the stars.

The observatory is open between sunset and 11 p.m. from June until August. From September to May, the observatory

is open between 7 p.m. and 10 p.m. Admission is free.

ANTELOPE PARK, located at 23rd and N streets, covers 139 acres. For the sports-minded, there are baseball diamonds and basketball courts, hiking and biking trails, an 18-hole golf course, swimming pool and tennis courts.

Ager Memorial Zoo and flower gardens will interest nature lovers. Picnic buffets get their chance at Antelope too: tables and grills, shelters, drinking fountains, concession stands and restrooms all are available.

Except for swimming pools and golf courses, no entrance or facility fees are charged at Antelope or any other Lincoln municipal park, Cooper said. Rental fees are charged for boats at Holmes or horses at Pioneers Park. Fees also are charged for classes and special activities.

Cooper said that reading the list of activities planned for summer "would take hours."

Three main programs are planned in Antelope Park this summer.

The first program, "That's Entertainment" is a series of dance, musical and dramatic programs. Community groups, such as the Lincoln Southeast High School Symphony and the Lincoln Municipal Band, are scheduled to perform. The programs will run Thursday through Sunday nights from May 26 until Aug. 8. The programs are free and will be held in the Antelope Bandshell.

"**ART IN THE PARK**" is scheduled for June 12, just off 27th Street. Cooper said artists and their work will be featured along with clowns and balloons.

"Another big event we're really excited about is on June 4... it's the first real senior (citizen) Olympics in Lincoln," Cooper said.

Anyone over 55 may participate in track and field events, swimming, wheelchair basketball, and softball throwing contests. Other events will include bingo and aerobics.

Other parks' special activities include softball and soccer leagues and a rifle and pistol range. The range is located on the west side of 10th Street, south of Military road and is open all year. Fees are charged. Hunting or trapping is not permitted in any city park.

Four city parks have physical fitness courses: Roberts, on 56th and Sumner streets; Southwood, 4400 Southwood Drive; Tierra Briarhurst, 27th and Tierra Street; and Wilderness Park, 1st and Van Dorn streets.

Two parks, Southwood, and University Place, 49th and Garland streets, have horse-shoe courts.

Continued on Page 9

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