

Allison Osman
Recreation Is Alive in Ballantyne
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Ballantyne is a community where people have the opportunity to live fun, healthy lifestyles filled with entertaining and active recreation. Public and private entities provide numerous avenues for men, women and youth to enjoy indoor and outdoor recreation, either in groups, as families, or as individuals.

Greenways

Lower McAlpine Creek and McMullen Creek Greenways is a continuous four-mile stretch of paved, gravel and boardwalk trails. These paths are avenues of free recreation for bicyclists, joggers, walkers, in-line skaters, skateboarders, people walking leashed pets or pushing baby strollers, and those taking a stroll to observe and appreciate the city's natural beauty in the form of trees, streams and wildlife. The trails are also wheelchair accessible.

According to Julie Clark, division director of Greenway Planning and Development for Mecklenburg County Park and Recreation, the benefits of greenway recreation are two-fold.

- "[The trails] serve as buffers along our creeks and streams and help preserve natural areas for wildlife and native plants. Mecklenburg County trails offer convenient, safe and accessible opportunities for recreation and fitness. That's great for individual health, as well as the health of our overall environment," said Clark.

The main access point to the Lower McAlpine Creek and McMullen Creek Greenways is at Highway 51 across from the McMullen Creek Market. The access point is complete with parking, a small picnic area, and water fountains for both ~~man-people~~ and dogs. Residents may also access the trails from additional neighborhood locations along the way.

Just completed in August 2008 is a new 2.1 mile extension to the Lower McAlpine Creek and McMullen Creek greenway system named Four-Mile Creek Greenway, according to Joseph Mangum, greenway planner for the Mecklenburg County Park and Recreation Department. This addition brings the total length of Ballantyne's trail system up to approximately six miles each way^[ECB1].

The newly constructed access point to the new Four-Mile Creek Greenway is located on Johnston Road, just north of the Route 485 connection. ~~Conveniently, it-it has-offers~~ both parking and bathrooms.

"The trail meanders through significant stretches of wetland and is made up of expansive sections of boardwalk. The Four-Mile Creek floodplain is home to a great blue heron rookery and numerous other wildlife species," said Clark about the new Four-Mile Creek Greenway.

521 Recreation Center

The 521 Rec Center, run by Mecklenburg County Park and Recreation Department, is located just off Ardrey Kell Road near the intersection with Highway 521. The purpose of the center is to provide leisure and recreational

programming for the public as a whole, according to facility manager Chris Hunter. Both indoor and outdoor activities are available for young and old.

New to the center and scheduled to open to the public in October is an outdoor recreational complex that will include four synthetic soccer fields, a sand volleyball pit, a picnic shelter, and an 18-hole beginners disc golf course, said Hunter. The rules of disc golf are modeled after regular golf, ~~and~~; the aim is to get the Frisbee in the basket in as few strokes, or throws, as possible, meeting or beating par for each "hole."

The rec center programs include youth sports, fielding flag football, baseball, soccer and basketball teams in divisions ranging ~~in age~~ from six years and under to 16 year olds. Smart Start sports clinics, in which parents and children participate in the activities together, are available for four, five and six year olds.

Arts and music are also part of the programming for children at the rec center. ~~For example, l~~essons in piano, violin and drums are taught by Community School of the Arts professionals, ~~and e~~. Children may also take drawing or ballet classes.

"If we identify a need, we do our best to make it happen," said Hunter.

As a result, teens can find free, safe and fun entertainment in a non-threatening environment. Community teens can play basketball on the rec center's indoor courts, play with the Wii system in the lounge, and ~~hang out in the game room~~ playing pool and air hockey in the game room.

"I like to play kickball, other catching and kicking games, and soccer," said Sam Cowley, a Ballantyne youngster who goes to the rec center during the day to play sports with the rest of his Morrison YMCA summer camp group. "I also get to go to the rec center whenever I want and play basketball with my friends or go into the game room and play pool, since I live nearby."

521 Recreation Center is not just for kids. Adults can enjoy basketball, fencing, Jazzercise, music lessons, and a variety of instructional classes.

A growing area of the rec center's programming is aimed toward senior citizens. Jazzercise light is currently offered, and ~~this fall will bring a new program called~~ Alive After 55 will begin this fall. ~~This~~ The program will incorporate low-impact aerobics, bridge tournaments, and senior trips that range from include visits to the Biltmore House in Ashville, N.C., ~~to~~ and anywhere else the seniors decide to go.

The price is right at 521 Recreation Center, with programs at little or no cost. "This is not a money-making venture," said Hunter. "Nominal fees go to providing the basic necessities of programming."

Ballantyne Corporate Park

This corporate park is equipped with green spaces and recreational activities for workers, visitors and residents to enjoy. Parks and trails provide sites for the public to exercise, practice putting, fish, bike, walk and picnic with family and friends.

A new Fit-Trail just opened in June and is accessible from Ballantyne Corporate Place. ~~This~~ The walking and jogging trail is equipped with 20 stations,

each containing an exercise apparatus and a sign illustrating techniques to complete the exercise. Each exercise is designed to improve flexibility, cardiovascular conditioning, muscle strength or muscle endurance. The trail itself, which is 2,000 feet long and 6 feet wide, is made from crushed recycled concrete topped with limestone for softer joint impact. Another helpful aspect of the course is the target heart rate guides interspersed at key exercise stations along the trail.

An eight-hole putting green is open to the public and is located just off Ballantyne Corporate Place, near the massive bronzed bull figures and in the horse-shoe of the Chandler, Hixon and Simmons buildings. The putting green is well manicured and rests in a peaceful setting. A putter caddy holding putters and balls is on-site weekdays from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. The equipment is free for use and must be returned upon completion of putting. The green is still-also open to the public during off-hours and weekends, but players must bring their own putters and balls.

Pocket parks present a variety of outdoor activities. Fishing is welcome at Cullman Park and Kid Pond. Walking paths are available at Crawford Pond, Hixon Pond, Cullman Park, Kid Pond and the Ballantyne Walking Trail. Additionally, grills and picnic areas are found at Patrick Park, Horton Park, Hixon Pond and Cullman Park. Easily one of the most recognizable green spaces, Our Park is home to the three giant bull sculptures that have become favorites of children who like to climb all over the intriguing creatures. Interconnecting all of these parks, recreational sites and exercise opportunities are bike paths and sidewalks.

“My husband and I like to ride our bikes in Ballantyne Corporate Park because it’s a quiet and scenic atmosphere. I feel safe there on the paths,” said Rachel Pascarella, store manager at-of It’s A Grind Coffee House in Ballantyne Village. “We also like to stop and rest at the bulls and other pocket parks with benches.”

While all are welcome to enjoy the micro-parks, the-company-encourages parental supervision, leashing of pets, and procurement of a North Carolina state fishing license for-use-at-the-ponds-are-encouraged. Guests should call (704-) 248-2000 to reserve and coordinate park usage for groups or parties, according-to-said Karen Martin, communications coordinator for The Bissell Companies, Inc., which manages all-that-the-Ballantyne-Corporate-Park-has-to-offer.

In addition to the self-guided recreational activities, the corporate park enjoys-hostsing events for their tenants and the community. Check out www.go-ballantyne.com for an updated listing of events open to the public.

Ballantyne Resort Golf Course

The Golf Club at Ballantyne Resort is the only public golf course in Ballantyne, and it-is located on the grounds of the upscale, luxurious resort. Through a series of major renovations to be completed by the beginning of September, the club has been enhancing the course and adding amenities in-order to provide the region’s best total golfing experience, according-to-said golf director Woody Allen.

~~Some of the improvements described by Allen are as follows. According to Allen, H~~hole two has a new design and layout, hole three ~~became is now~~ a par four, and hole ~~twelve-12 became is now~~ a par five, all ~~in order~~ to make the holes more playable for all skill levels. ~~A The~~ renovated driving range complex includes a leveled driving range surface, two putting greens, and a golf outing pavilion with more food and beverage options. Additional enhancements include expanding greens for more playing surface and a wider variety of pin positions, and expanding and leveling all 18 tee boxes to heighten the golf experience.

Morrison Family YMCA at Ballantyne

The YMCA is unique in that it approaches recreation from a whole-person standpoint, emphasizing healthy spirit, mind and body, according to Michelle Miller, associate executive director of Morrison YMCA. The Morrison YMCA approaches health and recreation in ways that people find fun. ~~They Staff~~ meet people where they are in their recreational desires and needs, and make sure ~~that~~ they have activities and programs for people to get healthy in either a social or individual setting, said Miller.

New to the Morrison Family YMCA is ~~their a~~ roller hockey rink, added in June. Because of the new outdoor rink and newly implemented program, youth and adults can participate in both clinics and in national leagues. ~~Also new this fall is~~

~~An art studio, new this fall, which~~ will offer pottery and ceramics classes for adults and children.

Scheduled for completion in January 2009, the facilities expansion project will increase the amount of health and fitness programs. For example, a larger fitness center, a new cycle studio, yoga and ~~pilates Pilates~~ classes, ballet, gymnastics, and wellness offerings will be added.

Approximately 1,500 families in the Ballantyne area are involved in children's sports, according to senior membership and marketing director Eve Bailey. Sports leagues^[ECB2] include basketball, volleyball, flag football, soccer, t-ball and cheerleading.

Additional programs for young people include ~~kKinder fFitness~~, ~~which is~~ gymnastics for kids up to five years of age, ~~plus and~~ a teen leadership development program. The teen program involves physical education, ~~volunteering in the~~ facilitation of outdoor sports and aquatics, and a physically intensive and fun leadership conference.

Adult recreation is also available at the Morrison YMCA. Leagues include ultimate Frisbee, dodge ball, outdoor cycling, soccer, basketball and lacrosse. A large workout facility is also located on-site. Additionally, an active older adult program focuses on social connection and is open to adults 55 years of age and older.

The Morrison Family YMCA is located at Bryant Farms Road and is part of the community. "Proceeds from recreational programs and events benefit community outreach," said Miller.

YMCA, Ballantyne Village

The Ballantyne Village YMCA is an extension of the Morrison Family YMCA. This express YMCA, ~~as it is called,~~ is open to members 18 years of age and older. Because of the age requirement, the site tends to attract a lot of young professionals who live and work in Ballantyne.

The 10,000-square-foot facility at Ballantyne Village contains a fitness center, offers exercise classes, provides trainers, and offers massages. The fitness center is complete with cardio equipment, circuit training machines, and free weights. While a variety of classes take place daily, this particular YMCA focuses onf yoga and ~~pilates~~Pilates. Individualized attention is available ~~in the form of through~~ personal training, ~~pilates~~-Pilates reformer sessions, and private yoga training.

"I go to the Ballantyne Village YMCA every weekday. Everybody there is very nice and accommodating. It's like my second home. I find it convenient because I can walk there from my condo across the street," said Mary Wright, a resident of Belle Vista ~~condominiums~~-Condominiums in Ballantyne.

Sports Connection at Ballantyne

This sports and family entertainment center appeals to adults, children, families and groups. Within the one Sports Connection building, there are four separate indoor recreation areas, plus a café that offers salads, sandwiches, wraps, snack-bar foods and beverages. Activities include laser tag, bowling, arcade games and a Jump-N-Play.

Sports Connection's laser tag facility is the largest in North Carolina, according to Sport's Connection—~~at~~ Ballantyne's co-owner Evan Miller. It is a two-story course, complete with black lights, fog, computerized team bases that keep score, plus phasers and laser-sensitive body armor for players.

The other three ~~components~~-recreation areas are also spacious and entertaining. The bowling alley contains 14 regulation lanes. The arcade offers more than 100 games, ~~in addition to plus~~ six mini-bowling lanes. And for young children, the Jump-N-~~play~~-Play room includes six inflatable, bouncy obstacles for jumping, sliding and playing.

"There are multiple, unique activity areas under one roof to appeal to a wide audience," said Miller. Sports Connection —~~at~~ Ballantyne is located on Ardrey Kell Road, across the street from Shoppes at Ardrey Kell. Pricing information is available at www.sportsconnectionnc.com.

"One night, I went bowling with a group of friends and we stayed until closing," Mary Price, a 2008 Ardrey Kell High School graduate, said of a recent experience at Sports Connection —~~at~~ Ballantyne. "The employees were really nice to us and didn't rush us out."

Peak Fitness

While this fitness center is a separate entity, it is adjacent to Sports Connection. The gym includes more than 100 pieces of cardio equipment with wall-mounted flat-screen televisions in view, circuit training machines, free weight stations, ~~plus and~~ aerobics and spin classes. Customers benefit from the amount and selection of workout equipment, according to co-owner Evan Miller.

Free childcare is included ~~for members~~ during workout sessions ~~for members~~, and parents may pay for older children to use a separate entertainment room while they work out.

Blakeney Racquet Club ~~of~~ Charlotte

While most tennis facilities in the Ballantyne area are within neighborhood clubs or open to guests of hotels only, Blakeney Racquet Club ~~of Charlotte~~ is a private facility open to members from Charlotte and beyond. According to its mission statement, the club aims to create a recreational medium for the surrounding community that will foster a healthy lifestyle.

The club offers 10 outdoor tennis courts: five ~~HurHar~~-Tru, three hard, and two red clay courts. The club also has two indoor racquetball courts and a fitness center. Child watch, locker rooms and a sauna are available for members' enjoyment.

A junior Olympic sized ^[ECB3]swimming pool, with a water slide, is new to the club and opened in July, according to Jo Henry, head tennis professional.

In addition to men's and women's recreation, the club offers junior tennis programs and lessons to all ages. Three tennis instructors are available to members.

With a motto of "live, work, play and stay," Ballantyne offers multiple options for active recreation to suit a variety of leisure preferences and passions. Whether the activity is roller hockey, golf, tennis, laser tag, bowling, sports leagues or indoor facilitated exercise, it and many others ~~s-outlets~~ can be found in Ballantyne.