

Norfolk Insider

City of Norfolk, NE

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“Norfolk AquaVenture Water Park Affected by Cool Weather”

Cooler weather this summer made for lower attendance numbers at Norfolk’s AquaVenture Water Park. Similar to what happened at water parks across the Midwest, temperatures that hovered under 80 degrees in July discouraged area swimmers from heading to Norfolk’s water facility. This compares with weeks of heat last year that brought record numbers of swimmers to water parks. Potential swimmers were back in school when much of the heat this summer settled on Nebraska.

“If we could have switched the end of August and first week of September for the end of July this year, we would have had a great turn out. It was a crazy thing. July is a great month for water parks as kids are done with camps and ready to swim. This summer we had 14 days when the temperature didn’t go above 70 degrees. Only the “polar bear” group came when it was 75 degrees. We’re pleased we did as well as we did,” said Sheila Schukei,

Human Resources Manager for the City of Norfolk.



Schukei estimated that, after paying all of the staff, power and water bills at the water park, the expenditures were \$45,915 more than the income. Last year the park had \$18,955 of excess revenue after paying all of the expenses.

She pointed out that in the years prior to opening the City’s new AquaVenture Water Park, the Memorial Pool and Liberty Bell Pool, which were traditional box pools, regularly ran in the red.

“We would lose over \$80,000 each year with those pools because of the high costs of keeping them full of water and maintained. We never made enough money to pay the staff. It was considered a service to the citizens,” Schukei said.

Schukei said this year that about 43,000 swimmers came to the AquaVenture Water Park. Last year that number was closer to 63,000. When the City operated the box pools, the attendance was around 13,000 swimmers per year.

“The biggest supporters of AquaVenture are from Madison, Stanton and Pierce counties. We’re glad we’re here so they didn’t have to travel to another community to swim at a water park,” Schukei said.

There were 591 youth that braved the temperatures and took group swimming lessons this summer with another 441 private lessons taught. Forty-seven lifeguards along with another 20 aids and cashiers covered shifts at the water park that was open from noon until 8:00 pm seven days a week from Memorial Day weekend until mid-August.

Cities in other areas of Nebraska also saw a drop in attendance this summer including Fremont where the Omaha World-Herald reported attendance plunged 31 percent. A water park manager in Iowa emailed Norfolk officials wondering how their summer had gone as their waterpark had seen "its first major hit in attendance in revenue" in years.

Water park operators know that the weather will undoubtedly turn hot again. There is a \$3.5 million planned expansion at the Columbus Pioneer Plunge Water Park in 2014.

The AquaVenture Water Park opened in June 2012 after voters passed a \$16.4 million bond issue in 2010 to fund baseball, football and swimming improvements.