BICYCLIST WITH ALS CONTINUES TO RIDE THE TRAILS THANKS TO ST. CHARLES COUNTY PARKS

Park staff install new bridge at Bangert Island to improve accessibility

ST. CHARLES COUNTY, MO – St. Charles County Parks Department employees recently teamed up with the local biking community on a project that provides special needs cyclists better access to trails at the County’s Bangert Island park in St. Charles. Members of Gateway Off-Road Cyclists (GORC), approached the Parks Department after one of their riders was diagnosed with Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis (ALS). Staff quickly came together to build a new bridge; steel beams were set, bridge decking was assembled, and after more than 1,300 joints were welded together, a new bridge was constructed and installed in the park.

“We have a wonderful relationship with the St. Charles County cycling community,” says Parks Director Ryan Graham, “and we are so glad it was brought to our attention that widening the bridge at the park would make it more accessible for all park visitors. Our goal is to ensure guests in all our parks have an enjoyable experience.”

One of the local riders who was having difficulties accessing Bangert Island was David Frei. Recently diagnosed with ALS, a disorder that affects the function of nerves and muscles, Frei was determined to continue to ride the trails. He went from riding a standard mountain bike, to using a pedal assisted bike, and now is able to ride only a trike-style mountain bike on the trails. That bike was too wide to cross the former bridge.

After learning that Bangert Island was one of the few park trails Frei could still ride and knowing the challenges he was experiencing, GORC members contacted the parks department about widening the bridge.

St. Charles County Park staff recently installed the new bridge. It is 4 feet wide and spans 20 feet in length, twice as wide as the old bridge, and crosses over a slough on River Link Trail near the entrance to the park.

St. Charles County Parks strives to meet ADA standards in all park areas. Accessible playground equipment,
restrooms, parking lots, picnic tables, shelters and other equipment and facilities make it easy for those with disabilities to enjoy the beauty and recreation offered by our growing St. Charles County Parks system.

Nearly 4 miles of natural-surface trail is available for hikers and bicyclists to enjoy at Bangert Island, a 160-acre park located on an Island off the historic Katy Trail in St. Charles. The terrain in the park is relatively flat with soft soil conditions and is perfect for beginners. The wooded-lined paths offer scenic views of the adjacent Missouri River and is home to countless wildlife species and native flora. In addition to bird-watching, hiking, bicycling, and photography, park guests may also fish along the banks of the Missouri River that flows below the park.

For more information about St. Charles County Parks, visit www.stccparks.org or call 636-949-7535.

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About St. Charles County Parks & Recreation
The St. Charles County Parks & Recreation Department offers unique parks, diverse facilities and a broad range of programs and special events for all ages. The County currently operates 12 parks, including a Youth Activity Park and The Historic Daniel Boone Home. Veterans Tribute Park, our newest park development between Pitman Hill and Kisker roads is expected to open in 2018.

For more information and specifics about each park, visit www.stccparks.org.

About St. Charles County
Founded in 1812, St. Charles County is one of the fastest growing counties in Missouri, and the state’s third largest county in both population and economic share. St. Charles County consistently ranks one of the healthiest places to live in Missouri in the County.

Health Rankings report published by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation and the University of Wisconsin Population Health Institute. It is home to 12 scenic county parks encompassing more than 2,800 acres with additional land under development and more in reserve for future development.

With a population of 385,840, St Charles County is home to large employers including Citi, MasterCard Worldwide, Boeing and General Motors. It is ranked among the top 25 counties in the nation in high-tech job growth by the Progressive Policy Institute and consistently has the lowest unemployment rate in the Metropolitan St. Louis area.

St. Charles County employs nearly 1,100 in more than 30 departments and offices, who work to make the county an excellent place to live, work and shop.

For more information, please visit www.sccmo.org.