

Special Needs Playground Added to Bettendorf's Rocket Park

Written by Joe Collins
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- The Junior League of the Quad Cities is working in conjunction with the City of Bettendorf to add a play area in McManus Park (better known as Rocket Park) just off Interstate 74 to meet the needs of children with physical disabilities. Bettendorf has set aside \$30,000 to assist with the playground development. Another \$30,000 has been earmarked by the Junior League of the Quad Cities from money obtained from the Mannheim Steamroller Dress Rehearsal benefit, which was held in November 1998. The design and construction timetable has yet to be formalized.

- Users of MSN Internet Access got a rude shock recently if they tried to access their e-mail. It seems that Microsoft has implemented a "series of new initiatives to help protect your MSN account from unsolicited e-mail, often referred to as 'spam.'" Users were notified of the changes on April 13, which included settings on Outlook Express, and given until April 16 to install them, or they wouldn't be able to send or receive e-mail. This recent "initiative" is one of several planned by Microsoft. You can find out more on the Web at (http://supportservices.msn.com/us/content/qanda/qa_emailsecurity.htm).

- The next time you hear about Iowa lawmakers whining about budget shortfalls, try and remember this figure: \$35 million. That's the amount of money the state received as a payment from the tobacco industry as an installment on the tobacco-lawsuit settlement. The state has received \$126 million from the industry since 1998 and will eventually get \$2 billion through payments scheduled to run through 2025. The bulk of the money is used for anti-smoking and other health programs.

- Davenport-based Metrobank, Wells Fargo Bank Iowa, Bank of America, Firststar Bank, and U.S. Bank have filed a lawsuit in a federal district court in Des Moines claiming that Iowa's ban on ATM surcharges is unconstitutional. Combined, the five banks operate 420 ATMs in Iowa and want to charge the fees to recover their investment in the machines. A bank spokesperson said customers are warned about the fees by the machines and can avoid them by simply using their own bank's ATMs. By the way, according to estimates by the state attorney general's office, Iowa ATM users could pay about \$75 million in access charges if the ban is lifted.

- Privacy International has issued its annual U.S. Big Brother awards to celebrate invaders of privacy. The winners included: The FBI's Carnivore snooper program, dubbed Most Invasive

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Proposal; ChoicePoint, named Greatest Corporate Invader for the massive selling of records, accurate or not, to federal agencies, police, direct marketers, and election officials; the City of Tampa, awarded Worst Public Official for spying on Super Bowl attendees; and the National Security Agency, named Lifetime Menace for 50 years of spying. Runners up included IBM (for years of lobbying against privacy laws worldwide and for selling computers to developing countries to suppress populations) and the Direct Marketing Association (for ensuring that your junk mail is correctly delivered to you). You can find out more about Privacy International at (<http://www.privacyinternational.org>).

- Qwest Dex has announced the results of the 2000 Quad Cities area phone-book recycling program. With support of area Hy-Vee stores, 258,560 pounds of used phone books were collected – which exceeded the 1999 total by 51,680 pounds. Through the joint efforts of the Quad Cities communities, Qwest Dex has been able to recycle nearly 135,000 tons of outdated phone books since 1999. The phone books were shipped to a paper mill in the Pacific Northwest and will be recycled into directory-grade paper on which new Qwest Dex phone books can be printed.
- Scott County recently named a new county administrator. C. Ray Wierson, the current budget and information-processing director, was named to the post by county supervisors contingent upon both sides agreeing on a wage and benefits package. Wierson has worked for Scott County since 1977 – when he joined the auditor's office as budget and levy director – and will take office after current supervisor Glen Erickson retires at the end of the year.
- Welcome to readers in Iowa City. Speaking of which, Iowa City officials have dropped proposed ordinances restricting alcohol specials such as happy hour or dollar draws because they felt the proposals would have been too difficult to enforce. Instead, proposed ordinances would impose fines on bars violating alcohol laws, dictate how many drinks a person could buy at once, and restrict out-of-sight sales. Final versions of the new ordinances will be voted on May 1.
- Illinois citizens should be happy to note that their legislators are keeping their best interests at heart. With predictions of prices for gasoline rapidly rising to the \$2-per-gallon mark, with as much as \$3-per-gallon projected, there seems to be little interest in a repeat of the temporary elimination of the 5-percent state sales tax on fuel. (Lawmakers suspended the tax last year through December 31, 2000.) Governor George Ryan and the legislative leaders claim the state can't afford tax giveaways with the economy slowing, but it's probably worth remembering that there aren't any state elections this year.