



**Mount Vernon**

*An Innovative Community; Authentically Hometown*

## **No Swimming Lessons at Water Park This Summer**

*Widespread lifeguard shortage forces City to make change at Hiawatha*

MOUNT VERNON, May 10, 2022 – Swimming lessons will not be available at the City’s Hiawatha Water Park this year. A severe shortage of lifeguards has necessitated the cutback.

“The lifeguard shortage is not just a statewide phenomenon but something that’s taking place on a nationwide level. Having a lack of lifeguards is something that every community pool is struggling with, so we are not alone,” said Mayor Matt Starr.

The hours of operation at the Hiawatha Water Park this year will be from noon to 7 p.m., with the pool scheduled to open for the season on May 28. The Senior Lap swim will continue this summer as usual, as will the H2O HIT (High Intensity Training) on Mondays and Wednesdays at 7:15 p.m.

Nationwide, there are now anywhere from 40 percent to 50 percent fewer lifeguards available to watch over the country’s public pools and beaches this summer, according to the American Lifeguard Association (ALA). Although lifeguard numbers have been on the decline for years, the coronavirus pandemic is being blamed for the recent plunge in available lifeguards.

The pandemic forced the shutdown of lifeguard certification and recertification classes for more than a year, and when classes resumed they were smaller than usual, resulting in far fewer certified lifeguards able to work this summer. Many cities had come to depend on international students and foreign seasonal workers to fill their lifeguard positions, but the pandemic took away that option as well.

“Although about a third of the public pools both across the state and the country will be either closed or faced with drastically reduced hours this summer because of the lifeguard shortage, we’re pleased that our Hiawatha Water Park will be open,” Safety-Service Director Rick Dzik said.

“This staffing challenge could be with us for a while, but the City is doing everything it can to get the word out that we need lifeguards. Mount Vernon’s families depend on the swimming lessons at Hiawatha, and we look forward to bringing them back when we have the staff to do so.”

**### END ###**

### **ABOUT THE CITY OF MOUNT VERNON:**

The City of Mount Vernon is an innovative community with an authentic hometown feel. The City is dedicated to providing modern services with an emphasis on continual improvement, customer service and equitable laws that support our citizens and visitors, while retaining and attracting investors in our community. Home to 17,000 people, Mount Vernon is the county seat for Knox County and boasts historic buildings and districts as well as business and professional, educational and recreational opportunities through many adaptive reuses of the community’s infrastructure and spaces. The City has strong ties to higher education, with Mount Vernon Nazarene University, Kenyon College and Central Ohio Technical College operating satellite locations in the historic downtown. Located 40 miles northeast of Columbus, Mount Vernon is near the geographic center of Ohio and has connections all over the globe.

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