

SEARCH

## Local News



## FunWagon is in gear

### First Citizen's donation revives park activity program

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BY MICHAEL ANDERSEN  
COLUMBIAN STAFF WRITER



Under guidance of their grandfather, Felix, sisters Kaydreona, 8, and Yvette, 4, work together to win a game of bingo Wednesday during FunWagon activities at Orchards Park.

Gassed up using cash from a local parks philanthropist, a van full of sports equipment, arts, crafts and toys is making the rounds all summer to 10 of Clark County's parks.

The "FunWagon" offers free, supervised weekday outdoor play for anyone who shows up.

Two city employees lead the activities for what a parks manager said usually turns out to be about a dozen kids.

The program, which was funded by the city of Vancouver until a round of 2003 budget cuts, costs about \$1,250 a week. The Parks Foundation of Clark County says it's only raised half of the \$10,000 needed for the summer, but is

willing to lose money if necessary to prove that the service is important.

"Play is serious business for kids," said Florence Wager of Vancouver, a parks advocate. "It's where they learn how to get along with other kids and what leadership is."

Wager, 81, kicked off the FunWagon program with the \$1,000 award she received from Columbian Publisher Scott Campbell for being named this year's Clark County First Citizen.

Wager said children need fun things to do outside, regardless of their family's financial situation.

"It's our obligation to be serving all the kids in the community," she said. "Not just those who can afford to pay to go into Firstenberg, go into the community center, be in Little League."

For children between 4 and 18, each visit to the Firstenberg Community Center in east Vancouver costs \$3. For adults under 60, it's \$5.

In addition to Wager's donation, the FunWagon has raised another \$3,750, including \$1,000 from the Vancouver-based Community Foundation, which gives out the First Citizen award.

Vicki Vanneman of the Vancouver-Clark Parks and Recreation Department said 130 children a week have been using the FunWagon.

Cheri Martin, executive director of the Parks Foundation, said the foundation won't be able to run the program every summer.

But she hopes that if enough kids enjoy the program, the city and county governments will decide to chip in next year.

"If it's successful and we can show the numbers, we can prove the importance of it and the need for it," Martin said.

Battle Ground Parks and Recreation also is running traveling summer programs for children, partially underwritten by a grant from the Parks Foundation. More information is available at [www.cityofbg.org](http://www.cityofbg.org).

Wager said the FunWagon's basic goal is simple:

"Anything that'll keep them away from the boob tube in the summer and get them out, as far as I'm concerned, is worth it," she said.

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#### FunWagon schedule

##### Mondays

10 a.m. to noon, Eisenhower Park, 9201 N.W. Ninth Ave.

1 to 3 p.m., Shumway Park, 3014 F St.

##### Tuesdays

10 a.m. to noon, Edgewood Park, 3212 E. Evergreen Blvd.

1 to 3 p.m., CenterPointe Park, Fourth Plain Boulevard and Pacific Way.

##### Wednesdays

10 a.m. to noon, Walnut Grove Park, Northeast 58th Avenue and 70th Street.

1 to 3 p.m., Orchards Park, 9800 N.E. 54th St.

##### Thursdays

10 a.m. to noon, Sifton Park, Northeast 131st Avenue and 71st Street.

1 to 3 p.m. Diamond Park, Northeast 145th Avenue and 28th Street.

##### Fridays

10 a.m. to noon, Tanglewood Park, Northeast 98th Avenue and Sixth Place.

1 to 3 p.m., Cascade Park, 13003 S.E. Seventh St.

To support FunWagon donate at [www.parksfoundation.us](http://www.parksfoundation.us) or call 360-693-7050.