



Daily photo by Jonathan Palmer

Attendance at the J. Gilmer Blackburn Aquatic Center at Point Mallard is booming this summer. Marketing officials say "duck bucks" and electronic ticketing may be helping. Through Sunday, 46,486 visitors walked through the gates compared to 40,000 at the same time last year.

It's ducky at Mallard

Decatur water park experiences explosion in attendance, revenue with Duck Bucks and ClicknPrint Tickets

By Catherine Godbey

cgodbey@decaturdaily.com

The gift shop at J. Gilmer Blackburn Aquatic Center accepts cash, credit — and, yes — duck bucks. Never seen a duck buck? You will, if you rent a locker. The duck buck resembles a dollar, but don't expect to see a dead president's profile. Mike Mallard, the park's mascot, graces the center of the duck buck, which patrons can use only at the gift shop.

Julianne Lowman, marketing coordinator for Decatur Parks and Recreation, believes the launch of the duck buck voucher system and electronic ticket system, plus an increase in rental parties, is contributing to an attendance explosion. Through Sunday, 46,486 visitors walked through the gates compared to 40,000 at the same time last year. "On Saturday, we had 2,935 in attendance. That's double the amount we had last year on the same day. Sunday we tripled the number of people from last year. Our ATM actually ran out of money," Lowman said. These numbers do not include the attendance associated with rental parties.

Last year the Aquatic Center received \$64,600 from after-hour parties; this year the Aquatic Center anticipates generating \$82,600 in parties. "These numbers do not include the additional revenue from renting the pavilion or from the concession stand," Lowman said. She attributes the increase in parties to the production of corporate sales kits. "In the past, we sent out a single generic letter. This year we created corporate sales kits that included beach towels," she said. Friday, Cook's Pest Control rented the park for its annual party. Carl Monin, Cook's vice president of human resources, praised Point Mallard's family atmosphere. "It's great for both young and old," he said.

Point Mallard is also tapping the Internet to increase its profits. This season the Aquatic Center unveiled the ClicknPrint Tickets system. "We started this system because we had so many people calling and asking about purchasing tickets online," said Lowman. To date the system has already sold tickets translating into more than \$30,000 in revenue, in less than one third of the season.

Lowman envisions a continued increase in revenue and attendance with the approaching Stihl Timber Sports Series and the Spirit of America festival.