Winchester Recreation Department

Tanya Risucci, Director

The mission of the Winchester Recreation Department is to develop a progressive and responsive organization, which will not only provide a variety of meaningful leisure activities for the community but improve the quality of life for all citizens. It is our intent to build partnerships with all people, businesses, and organizations, as well as, achieve the goals and aspirations of all population groups. In 2017-2018, the Winchester Recreation Department has progressed to fulfill the mission of the department through the creation of new partnerships, added programs offerings, and new community events.

A nine-member Board of Recreation assists the Director of Recreation. The board sets broad-based policy and meets the first Wednesday of the month at 7:00 pm at Town Hall except for July which meets the second Wednesday. The Board meetings are open, and the public is invited to attend. James DiVita, a member of the Board of Recreation for 40 years, chairs the Board.

The Director of Recreation is responsible for planning, implementing and coordinating year-round programs for children, adults and families and organize community events. In addition to its program offerings the Winchester Recreation Department works with volunteers, nonprofit and private sector organizations to provide a variety of community-based recreation activities.

The Department sponsors community special events including Trunk or Treat, which was held on October 28th at the playground. We had businesses and groups of parents that set up their trunks and gave out candy to over 100 families that came out for the event. Inside the playground building we had art and crafts, a costume judging contest that day with four lucky winners, with the bounce house and other activities outside.

In early December, we decorated our Christmas tree in East End Park, although this year was a bit different we created our own Christmas tree by the stage and held our annual Christmas Tree Lighting Ceremony. Over 100 townspeople came out to drink hot chocolate, take pictures with Santa, listen to holiday songs, tell stories, make Christmas cards and marvel at the beautiful tree. We would like to thank Noujaim’s restaurant for letting us use the restaurant to host Santa and making this day special.

In March, the Annual Easter Egg Hunt took place the Playground and Green Building, and hundreds of children came to this event and had plenty of fun, along with receiving a lot of candy. The department also did a best decorated egg competition, were the kids brought a hard boil egg that they designed at home for the contest. On a clear Friday night during the summer we also showed Moana with Film Force, we have over 50 families come out to watch this free movie in the park.
In July and August, we have the summer fun camp for ages 5-14 which takes place at the Rowley St Playground. The camp lasted seven weeks this year, while the kids attended one field trip per week and went to Resha Beach for swimming once a week as well. The Gaylord Tiffany Foundation and Barden Foundation makes generous donations to help fund the summer camp and playground facility.

The Recreation Department also offers a variety of programs during the year for all ages. The programs include Dance and Gymnastics, Karate, Youth Travel Basketball, Youth Recreation Basketball, Men’s Basketball, Adult Softball, Dog Obedience, Futsal, Bootcamp, Summer Playground Camp, Yoga, Babysitting course, MLB hit pitch and run, home run derby and Twister Clinics for Baseball and Softball. This year we also teamed up with the Board of Education’s School Lunch Program at the Gaylord-Tiffany Building. Every year the recreation department tries to add more and different sports and activates for the community. Recreation activities are conducted throughout the community including Recreational Facilities, Pearson School, Northwestern Connecticut Community College, East End Park, and Gilbert School. New programs that started this year included Cardio-Kickboxing and Art-Venture classes that took place at the playground building.

Brandon Fields is the basketball coordinator for the town and does all the work with recreation basketball K-3 and 4th-6th grade and finds volunteers for each of the teams. The Winsted Youth Softball and Baseball League (WYL) and the Winsted Youth Soccer Association (WYSA) are also branches of the Recreation Department. These leagues are comprised of 100% volunteers. They each require an executive board who meet throughout the year to create a bigger and better program each year. Darek Schibi serves as the President of the Winsted Youth Softball and Baseball League, while Kevin Lillie took over as the President for Winsted Youth Soccer Association. Together, these two leagues involve over seven hundred children during the spring, fall and summer seasons.
This past year the Winsted Travel Basketball Programs brought home three championships and represented the town on the court. The boys 5/6 grade team Coached by Brandon Fields and Rich Bunel. The Girls 5/6 grade team coached by Kurt Root and Ray Arel. The Girls 7/8 grade team coached by Ashley Clement all took the championship in their age groups.

The Recreation Department maintains and supervises facilities throughout the community. The maintenance staff consists of three-part time seasonal employees under the direction of the Recreation Director and Jim Welcome, Maintenance Supervisor. The Recreation Director also supervises all the lifeguard staff at Resha and Holland Beach at Highland Lake. The beaches are maintained year-round and the lifeguard staff is present between Memorial Day to Labor Day.

The main facilities are located on Willow Street and Rowley Street. On the corner of Willow and Rowley, is the Laurel City Skate Complex which is open sunrise to sunset throughout the course of the year, weather permitting. The Rowley Street fields include the Gaylord-Tiffany Building and Playground, a basketball court, Gaylord-Tiffany Field, the Senior Farm Field and Ryan Field. Willow Street features the Hanley “Little League” Field, Dodge Field, Walker Field, Walker Field Grandstand, and two tennis courts. Willow Street also houses the Recreation Department maintenance facility. The playground and grounds have had some recent upgrades made to it. The walker field grand stand was repainted and fixed, along with near pavers are set for the walkway to the field. With the help of the Gaylord Tiffany Foundation the playground building also had a new roof placed this past year.
This year has been full of events, activities, programs, and a tremendous amount of fun! As my fourth year as director, I am truly grateful to be able to serve the Town of Winchester and Community. I would like to strive to bring new programs to the town and continue to make great things happen.