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 2015-2016, 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.

An eight 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 with the exception of 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 has 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 Trick or Treat Main Street, which was held on October 28th were participating downtown merchants gave out candy for Halloween. The Town Hall also did a Costume Judging Contest that same day that day and four lucky winners. In early December, we decorated our Christmas tree in East End Park, 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. 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 a contest. We also held two movies with Film Force over the summer at the playground building.

In June and July, we have our 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. This year the VFW and Art Melcher came out to the playground on August 14th and did a wonderful cook out for the camp and all the children in the neighborhood. Over a hundred of kids came out to this event to enjoy the food and park. 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, senior group exercise 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, this year we were able to team up with ProMarineEd and offer safe boating classes to certify those with boating and personal watercrafts. We also started working with the American Heart Association to have babysitting courses. Recreation activities are conducted throughout the community including Recreational Facilities, Pearson School, Northwestern Connecticut Community College, East End Park, and The Blanche McCarthy Senior Center and Gilbert School.

The Boys Basketball Team also brought home the championship this part year in the Travel League, Coached by Brandon Fields. Brandon is the basketball coordinator for the town and does all the work with recreation basketball K-2 and 3rd-6th grade, and founds 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. Paul Gibson serves as the President of the Winsted Youth Softball and Baseball League, while Kevin Crowley serves 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 Back Rowley Softball field had new dugouts made.

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 Director also supervises all the lifeguard staff at Resha and Holland Beaches at Highland Lake. The beaches are maintained year round and the lifeguard staff present between Memorial Day and 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 has had some recent upgrades made to it. We put in a new climbing tower and slide along with a spring rider in the toddler section of the playground. New basketball backboards and hoops were also put up this year at the playground. We also did some work at Walker Field putting up safety netting in front of the dugouts with the help from Gilbert School. With the help of the Gaylord Tiffany Foundation many more improvements are still to come in the future. We also look forward to having the communities join together to help make these projects happen.

This year has been full of events, activities, programs, and a tremendous amount of fun! As my first 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.