



THE CITY OF GUNNISON RECREATION DEPARTMENT'S 2015 SPRING SIX MONTH REPORT

Since September of 2014, the City of Gunnison Recreation Department has been able to get through quite a workload. Our numerous program offerings keep us busy on a daily basis. The special events that we administrate, whether big or small, always present their unique challenges and rewards. Ensuring that our wonderful facilities are well utilized is certainly a priority, and the process of developing a ten year plan has made us roll up our sleeves and step out of our comfort zone. Thankfully the winter was a mild one by Gunnison standards, but we were excited to see Cranor Ski open for the second year in a row. Here is a look back on the last six months through the eyes of the Gunnison Recreation Department.

In September the majority of our clients, school children, are back in the classroom but our fall programs are in full swing. Soccer, gymnastics, and tackle football enjoy our highest participation numbers from a youth standpoint in the fall. Fitness classes, square dancing, and pickleball are generally where you see our strongest adult participation numbers. It is such a wonderful time of year here in the fall and the weekends are particularly special with our parks chalked full of soccer players, football games, and people enjoying the outdoors. Our staff takes a lot of time in September lining out the upcoming youth and adult hockey seasons. This was the first year that the Gunnison and Crested Butte programs combined to make the West Elk Hockey Association (WEHA). Though WEHA is a non-profit organization separate from our department, it still relies on our staff to schedule all of the youth hockey games, practices, tournaments, and adult leagues.

Early in October we fire up the compressors and start making ice at the Jorgensen Event Center. Hockey starts shortly thereafter, as does our very popular ice skating lessons. There were over two hundred and fifty youth hockey players playing organized hockey this year, approximately five hundred adult players between the fall and winter leagues, and fifty six participants in ice skating lessons. The Jorgensen Event Center continues to be well utilized and the rink staff did a very nice job of making a few subtle improvements that really made the rink pop. Many of our fall programs wind down at the end of October but we still host several games, as well as put on the annual NFL Punt Pass and Kick competition. This year we had about forty six participants with the winners moving onto Grand Junction for the regional competition. We also got the ball rolling in our ten year plan process by hosting four stakeholder meetings. Each meeting had approximately fifteen people from the community that we invited to come tell us what we are doing right, what we are doing wrong, and what we should focus on in the future. These meetings were largely successful and productive. Late in October we host our annual Freight Night. The aquatics staff does the lions' share of work getting the facility ready for this very popular event that takes place just before Halloween. We had hundreds of people show up, and enjoy the bounce house, haunted house, face painting, rides through the haunted swamp, and things of that nature.

Fall programs come to an end in November and we take time to plan for our winter offerings. It is also a very busy time in the hockey world as a lot of youth teams start playing their league games in mid November. The adult flag football league comes to an end though many of the teams participate in the annual Turkey Bowl that takes place on Thanksgiving morning. November was also a busy time for those in our department who were working with MIG (the firm that we hired to help us with our ten year plan) to develop the survey that went out to the public. We feel like we gained some usable feedback from those surveys which will be reflected in the actual ten year plan.

We start our winter programs in December. One of our points of emphasis this winter was to develop a boys and girls youth basketball league. In the past we have had coed teams that had limited amount of games. This year, our Recreation Coordinator Kyla Leonard, did a stand up job of marketing the program, finding quality coaches, and developing the league that will only grow from here. This winter we had strong participation numbers in many of our programs that wouldn't be considered our core programs. Those programs include aerial dance, the kids cooking program, rock climbing, cross country skiing, wrestling, and Tae Kwon Do. We take pride in having a variety of options and offerings. It's great to have one hundred kids in our basketball program but we are equally as proud to have twenty three kids learning how to cook healthy and nutritious meals. We started to see some snow accumulation in December and were able to pack a solid base layer that would lead to the opening of Cranor Ski Hill in late December. Families that take advantage of having Cranor open will tell you that it is a tremendous blessing to have a close, cheap, and extremely kid friendly ski hill located five minutes from town.

In January we continued with our winter programs and started marketing our first ever pickleball tournament that would take place in early March. We had a group of players that were extremely passionate about hosting a tournament and they did a phenomenal job helping us market the tournament, secure sponsorship contributions, and council our staff about the nuances of running a pickleball tournament. Though the tournament took place in the time period that will be covered in the next six month report, we can say that it was a tremendous success with forty eight teams of two playing in the two day tournament that many of them said was the finest tournament that they ever participated in. We were fortunate to have access to the Western State Colorado University Field House and the six courts that it houses, as well as the three courts at the Gunnison Community & Aquatics Center. In January we had a community meeting that gave folks an opportunity to come and educate themselves, and give feedback to our ten year planning process. Though the meeting wasn't as well attended as we would have liked to have seen the feedback was still important and it's nice to hear that by in large our community is appreciative of our efforts, and the constructive criticism that we did receive is helpful.

February remains a busy month for our department. The Gunnison Community Center is full with our winter programs. The only outdoor program we run is cross country skiing so our gymnasium, rock wall, aquatics center, gymnastics room, and meeting rooms are full of programs after school during the week. The ice rink remains extremely busy on a daily basis with youth practices and adult games during the week, and youth league games and tournaments on the weekend. Cranor Ski Hill stayed open through February with participation numbers fluctuating on a weekly basis. If the weather is great, and the snow at Crested Butte and Monarch is sub par then we see a few more families enjoying Cranor. After the snow storms came and went in late February we lost a few of our regular skiers to the resorts in the area. We were still able to run the O Be Joyful ski races. We had a lot of racers on that President's Day, and though the weather was a bit cold in the morning, those who participated had a great time, skied lots of laps, and took advantage of the free hot dogs.

It's challenging to jam all of the different activities, events, projects, and programs that we take on into a two page, six month report. Our workload can change drastically with one good idea from a community member or staff member – like it did this March when we were approached about developing a robust youth lacrosse league. What started off as a solid idea from a local mother has turned into a seventy kid program that will need help if it's to be successful...and it will be. That's why we are here, and we enjoy the process.

Sincerely,

The Gunnison Recreation Department