

A Great Year and A Promising Future for Revere Recreation

by Mayor Brian Arrigo and Michael Hinojosa, Director, Revere Parks and Recreation

The Revere Parks and Recreation Department is responsible for a great number of events and programs for the city and its residents including basketball leagues, baseball clinics, drop-in plays for toddlers, cooking classes, T-Ball and special events such as the Fall Festival, Fright Night, the Tree Lighting and the 4th of July BBQ. However, despite all of this current programming and success, we recognize that we can always be better, and we can always try and do more. This growth mindset motivated the department in 2017 and we went into the year with a goal of expanding and improving our offerings in unprecedented ways.

The end result was a record breaking year for our department. Our summer camp saw its highest enrollment in the department's history. Movie nights on Revere Beach were paired with weekly sponsors whose contributions covered all of the department movie night costs. And our toddler sports program switched from outside vendors to an in-house instructor, resulting in a better and more affordable program for Revere families.

While revamping these existing programs, we simultaneously conducted listening tours throughout the city's school system. These listening tours connected us with students and helped our department gain insight as to what the kids wanted and how we could connect our message to them. We responded to the students we met by announcing the following initiatives:

*****Video Game Club*****

Last January the department started the Thursday Video Game Club for students in 5th – 8th grade. This free weekly afterschool activity attracted dozens of kids and has become one of the most popular activities we offer.

*****Open Gym*****

Last Spring we launched a pilot program to bring back Open Gym sessions to the City of Revere. The pilot program began with two nights (one for middle school and one for high school) and was such a success that the initiative was instituted full time this past September. Now, moving forward, Open Gym nights will run on the first Friday of every month during the school year to provide Revere middle and high school students with a free indoor activity that's supervised and takes place at night.

*****High School Rec Basketball League*****

October of 2017 brought with it the launch of the Parks and Recreation Department's first ever high school basketball league. This intramural league is the first of its kind in the city's history and already features over 75 kids! We'll be continuing this initiative with an outdoor league in the spring and summer.

*****Teen Center*****

Recently, the Parks & Recreation Department announced the launch of a teen center in the basement of the Youth Center. This Teen Center was inspired by the many memories shared by older Revere residents of their visits to the old teen center that was downstairs during the 70's and 80's; as well as the requests of current RPS students for a safe space to hang out after school.

This center will be operational starting December, 18 on Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday until 7:00 pm for middle school and high school students. On Thursdays, the space will play host to our Video Game Club.

Revere Teen Involvement Committee

This past fall we also initiated a by teens, for teens program that features three Revere High School interns planning and implementing activities for kids their own age. This program will be overseen by department personnel but programming will be facilitated by the youth staff. These youth workers will be unveiling their ideas that they have been working on shortly after the New Year.

We're extremely proud of the steps we took in 2017 to become a better department. Our refocus on existing programs and expansion of programming to satisfy areas of need is a great achievement, but our work is not finished. 2018 will be even better than 2017, thanks to an expansion of our staff. Our administration understands that an investment in recreation for our kids is an investment in our city's future, so we will continue to fund initiatives to make Revere Rec even better.

In next week's column, we'll be discussing what's still to come for department programming in 2018.