

Winter Activities in Parks and Recreation

By Eileen Sheridan

Our playing fields may be in the “rest” phase but many of our sites are doing anything but resting. As the winter months progress and bring all of the lovely weather with it, many of our program people are busy planning and hosting different activities to keep children and adults busy. A couple of those events include: tumbling and gymnastics, Martin Luther King Jr Day of Service and of course, basketball, soccer and ice rink activity.

At a recent beginner tumbling meet at Gustine Recreation Center, the gym was packed to a standing-room-only crowd to see young girls compete and display the skills they have learned and hopefully perfected. Our staff should be commended for the organization and getting the girls placed four deep along the side of three mats that extend the length of the gym. Once the registrations are checked, the judges are in place, the coaches have made sure that the competitors have practiced their last minute skills, everything is ready to start. I have not seen the gym packed like this for a meet in a long time. Our staff makes sure that each girl goes in order, and the judges double-check the girls’ names as they are called to perform their routine. Many of our staff members have been doing this year after year, and kudos to them and the newcomers to the committee and of course, to Mike Grubb who makes it look easy.

Another activity that is a one-day event that we host at our sites is the Martin Luther King Jr Day of Service. Our staff volunteers to participate, and it is such a win/win event for all the sites that participate. There are many good things happening that we may witness or may hear about, or it may be overlooked but the projects and the volunteers help us to appreciate the work and the service being done at our sites. This year in District 4 we had several wonderful projects:

- On a freezing Jan. 21, there was a group from the Roxborough YMCA clearing the bike path at Houston Playground.
- At Simons, the day prior there was dinner and a movie with discussion on gang violence with a service project of cleaning inside and out on service day.
- A stop at Finley is where I caught Walter Marlin, the Advisory Council president, organizing the volunteers for cleaning projects in military style and Leader 1 Stephen Conwell getting his fraternity brothers involved with the spruce up of the gym.
- My final stop of the day was at Belfield where I had perfect timing. The large group of La Salle students were in the middle of painting the Belfield logo and website along the wrought iron side of 21st Street. Upon entering Belfield, the entire lobby had been painted thanks to the efforts of the La Salle group.

As cold as the day was, it is comforting to know that some much needed work had been accomplished at our facilities. Thanks to the staff at all of the sites for organizing your events.

There are many other activities that overtake our gyms and meeting rooms in the winter months such as indoor soccer, basketball and activity at the ice rinks which our staff is involved in and dedicates much time to making sure that they are fun, safe activities for our youth. Our Nutcracker Doll participants are awarded with tickets to the ballet at the beautiful Academy of Music. Some after school sites were recently treated to a performance at the Arden Theater of Cinderella. Such a wonderful way for our children to spend a winter afternoon!