



705 KINDERKAMACK ROAD • RIVER EDGE, NEW JERSEY 07661 • 201-599-6295

## RECREATION DIRECTOR'S ANNUAL REPORT – 2012

The Recreation Commission experienced a very successful year beginning with the largest participation to date for the 31<sup>st</sup> Annual River Edge Run and ending with the majority approval of the 2012 Open Space Referendum allowing for funding of approximately \$700,000 over the next five years for the development and maintenance of lands for recreation and conservation purposes.

### Highlights of 2012

- River Edge Run 2012 was a tremendous success!! The response to the partnership with the Foundation for Melanoma Research honoring the memory of resident Steve Farrell resulted in a remarkable increase of participation - River Edge Healthwalk- 120 walkers and 5k Run -654 finishers !! Other groups organized to honor loved ones as well – a trend that the Commission hopes will continue. The Run event highlights our businesses and organizations as well as our school community – a benefit to all who participate.  
As a result of the success of the 2012 Run and as promised to our event sponsors, the Commission used the events proceeds to install a new playground near the North Little League Field in Memorial Park, complete with swings for infants and toddlers, a see-saw for four and two of the very popular spinners- a welcomed addition by residents.
- After loss of Open Space funding in 2011 due to the defeat of the November referendum, the Commission was determined to get the word out to the residents regarding the importance of the Open Space Funds to our recreation facility maintenance and development. Over a ten year period the following projects were financed by the matching River Edge Open Space Trust Funds to Bergen County Open Space grants; Little League field reconstruction, new basketball and hockey courts, pathway system in Memorial Park, new park pavilion, new picnic area. new garden area, stream stabilization and finally the completion of the new tennis courts in 2010. The Open Space is crucial to the maintenance of the parks, fields and facilities. A very informative mailer was developed by the Commission and sent to all River Edge residents. In addition, the Commission contacted all youth and adult leagues requesting their support by sending out email blasts to their participants. Fortunately the referendum passed, making open space funds available for the next five years. Future projects that are being planned with the open space funding are the installation of a lightning detection system, refurbishing of our park signs, safety netting at the Little League Fields, KBG light system replacement with the Musco Light System, park and field maintenance along with the future development of the Cherry Blossom Park.
- A new volunteer coach requirement - Concussion Awareness Certification - was implemented by the Recreation Commission this year. The Commission was pro-active in putting this certification in place for the safety of the youth in our sports programs. To certify as many coaches as possible in a short time period, the Commission hired Dr. Catherine Mazzola of the New Jersey Concussion Center to train our coaches in concussion awareness. Coaches not able to attend the

seminar and all future youth coaches will receive certification by an online Center for Disease Control –youth sport head injury prevention education tutorial and test. All volunteer youth coaches are required to submit the concussion certification that shows successful completion of the on-line training.

- There exists a need to provide activities for our River Edge senior residents. This is difficult without the availability of a central location for gathering together and establishing programs. In order to provide some social activity, the Commission will offer weekday bus trips in 2013 to our seniors with the hope that this group will respond positively. The Commission is planning to mail out to all senior, an announcement of the intent to offer weekday bus trips and to seek feedback as to their interests.

The following is an overview of the Recreation Commission park facilities, events and programs for the year 2012

## FACILITIES

### **Kenneth B. George Park**

The maintenance of this facility which includes the fields, lighting, fencing and storage and concession stand is key to the success of the following programs: River Edge Amateur Baseball League, River Edge Girls Athletic League Softball, River Edge Men's Softball, River Edge Women's Softball, River Dell Soccer, River Dell Jr. Lacrosse, River Dell Junior Football and the River Dell Freshman Baseball Team. These programs start the last week in March and run through the first week of November and involve over twelve hundred resident youth and adult participants in addition to the local spectators and visiting teams.

The Commission's major maintenance concern of this facility is the stadium pole lighting which was installed over 29 years ago. In 2012, the Commission requested a proposal from Musco Lighting to replace the existing light system, in order to be prepared for potential replacement. The proposal was presented to the Mayor and Council during the 2012 budget process. The request for the cost of the replacement \$300,000 was denied.

Each season when the lights are turned on for the first time, especially when the fields have been flooded by storm surge, there is uncertainty that the light will come on. The cost of replacements and repair has been from \$5,500 to \$30,000 over the past seven years. .

The existing light test results for the softball field and baseball fields are way below average foot candle standards. The Musco Lighting proposal suggested a reduction of one pole and a total of 44 light fixtures based on the use of the Light Structure Green System. The existing system has nine poles and eighty-one light fixtures. Musco Light System Benefits include: 50% less operating cost, 50 % less light spillage, 100% Maintenance Free for 25 years, a control link to website scheduling system and performance monitoring system. The proposal package that was presented in 2012 will be re-submitted for consideration by the Mayor and Council during the 2013 budget process.

### **Memorial Park**

From the small picnic of a few to the 1500 to 2000 people at the 4<sup>th</sup> of July Fair, Memorial Park continues to be River Edge's center of social, recreational, and leisure activities for all ages. A clean park

### **Little League Fields – Hockey Rink – Basketball Court Area.**

The Commission committed the 2012 River Edge Run proceeds for the development of a small playground at the north end of the Little League fields. This playground project was completed at the end of the summer and has been well used from day one by our young residents. It includes two regular swings, one infant swing, two individual spinners and an updated see-saw for four children. The Commission also purchased picnic tables for this area for residents who attend the Little League games and also for the parents of the young children who are using the playground. The Commission will discuss expansion of this playground in the future.

Through a successful maintenance program over the past few years, the Little League fields have been kept at an excellent level of safety for the players. The Little League volunteers have been a tremendous help in working the fields along with the twice a week dragging of the fields by DPW. This past year, due to the lack of open space funds, the amount of clay available for fill-ins and especially in the dug-outs has been a problem. In 2013, with the Open Space funds in place, the mounds will be rebuilt and clay added to help with the drainage of the fields and dugouts. The basketball courts are used on a regular basis by residents of all ages and some non-residents not only for basketball but for skateboarding – Many of these skateboarders move the picnic tables to glide off from causing the edges to be damaged and sharp. As reported last year, the hockey rink is in need of repairs to some of the boards and doorway. A rather large crack that had been repaired three years ago is now getting larger and will need filling and coating. The rink is not used as much for hockey as it had been in the past. This past year with the Devils and Rangers in the Stanley Cup playoffs, there was an increase of use for a few weeks.

## **EVENTS**

### **River Edge Run**

The 31st Annual River Edge Run was held on Saturday, April 21st. Great weather and a terrific turnout of participants made this year's event our best and most successful ever.

The largest turnout to date for the 5k Run was due to the new partnership with the Foundation for Melanoma Research in memory and in honor of resident, Steve Farrell. The promotion of this partnership through the Susan Fazio Foundation and the outpour of support for the Farrell family resulted in a great number of runners and walkers. In addition, the Foundation was extremely pleased with the funds raised for melanoma research through our partnership. Another group of fifty residents pledged funds and ran in the event for a local resident.

The REGAL Runners pre-registered fifty-six girls for the 5k who along with their coaches- parent helpers started training in late February early March.

The 2012 Major Sponsors were River Edge Diner, McDonald's of River Edge, Feiler Dental Associates, Total Wine and More and Riverside Oral Surgery, Applebee's, Family Martial Arts Center, Freedom Bank and River Edge Family Dental, Parkway Toyota and new this year, Law Offices of Colin Quinn, Esq. and Madison Spine and Physical Therapy. A total of twelve Major Sponsors – a record number!

This event has become a well-known Bergen County event. Our volunteers who have handled the registration process for many years were on hand once again, which makes this portion of the event run so smoothly and thus makes a good first impression on the participants – many of which are from out of town.

The Volunteer Ambulance Service, Police Department, Police Reserves, Volunteer Fire Department a major part in the success of this event. Without their assistance, the Commission would not be able to provide the secure environment that is necessary when you have 654 people running the streets of River Edge.

The Healthwalk event which is sponsored by the River Edge Alliance Against Drugs received the benefit of new walkers totaling 119 and a \$1300 donation from the proceeds of the Healthwalk. These proceeds go to assist the Alliance Programs and supplies. The Fun Run Event was once again sponsored by the River Edge Elementary School District with approximately 380 runners.

New this year, the Commission decided to change the cotton long sleeve 5k t-shirt to a Performance-T short sleeve t-shirt. In addition, as suggested by several runners, the busy style artwork that had been the design of many of the past runs was changed to a left pocket River Edge Run logo and event date. This will be the standard 5k shirt design for the event.

The proceeds from the 2012 River Edge Run were used to install a new playground at the North Little League Field. The installation was completed in the summer and was instantly a hit with the children.

The Commission will once again partner with the Foundation for Melanoma Research for the 2013 River Edge Run.

### **Easter Egg Hunt**

The Easter Egg Hunt is co-sponsored by the Recreation Commission and the Junior Women's Club and has traditionally been held on the Saturday before the Easter Weekend. The number of young children in River Edge is very evident when it comes to this special event. This year was no exception with Memorial Park full of happy children, hunting for Easter eggs and enjoy the Easter Bunny and treats. The Junior Women's Club handles the organization of the event and has done an outstanding job for the past several years with the financial support coming from the Recreation Commission's operating budget – special events.

### **Halloween Parade**

The 2012 Halloween Parade was a success with approximately 300-350 children and parents attending. This event in Memorial Park is always well attended by parents and children who enjoy the parade and treats, the refreshments handed out by the Commission and the magical entertainment as well. A highlight of the event was the River Edge Girl Scout scarecrow contest troop entries. The scarecrow entries are placed along the pathway for viewing and winners are announced at the end of the magic show. The funds for this event come from the Recreation Commission operating fund – special events.

### **Holiday Lighting Ceremony**

This year's holiday lighting ceremony was very special as there were several welcomed changes to the program ending in a successful event, enjoyed by all. For the past ten years, the ceremony had been set at the Memorial Park pavilion. This year the ceremony was held in front of Borough Hall.

Participants were asked to gather in front of the Library where they were met by Mayor Moscaritolo, Frosty the Snowman and Rudolph. The Girl Scouts lead a holiday sing-a-long walk down Tenney Avenue to the front of Borough Hall. The Girls Scouts also entertained at the ceremony led by the Mayor who spoke proudly of the new evergreen tree just planted on the front lawn. The holiday lights were turned on as Santa arrived on the fire truck. Hot Chocolate and cookies were served in the Fire House which was decorated with Santa's corner for the children to visit and for picture taking!. The Fire Chief was very helpful in setting up the Fire House for the event and stated that the Fire Department looks forward to future holiday ceremony events!!

Characters from the North Pole and the supplies for the event are provided by funds from the operating budget – special events.

### **River Edge Day**

The 2012 River Edge Day was probably one of the best to date. The participation by community organizations and businesses was at an all-time high. The weather was perfect and people stayed to the very end of the event. This special event gives the municipal departments, commissions, committees, volunteer organizations and community businesses the opportunity to inform residents of who they are and what they do for our community. Many of the organizations have taken the opportunity to raise funds for their groups as well such as the Girl Scouts and the River Edge Education Foundation. The REEF chili cook off and cornbread bake off was a highlight of the day and provided some refreshments to the residents as well. River Edge Knights of Columbus were successful with their make your own sundaes and the Boy Scouts Troop 184 did well with their offerings. There were twenty-five spots allocated to participants around the oval pathway and under the pavilion. River Edge Day participants have the opportunity to take part in the free raffle of gift baskets and services as well. This continues to be a promotional benefit to those who provide a raffle as well. The River Edge based organizations and businesses are not charged for the participation in River Edge Day. A selection of non-resident vendors selling services and merchandise were invited to participate at a fee of \$40. Not many chose to participate.

The Recreation Commission participated in this event which was held on October 14<sup>th</sup> in Memorial Park from 1:00pm to 4:00pm. The Commission members promoted the Open Space referendum with hand outs and displays, as well as December bus trips, events and upcoming projects. The River Edge Day Event is now handled by the Special Events Committee. The Recreation Director is a member of this committee in an advisory position.

### **Fourth of July**

This annual event starts with a concert under the Memorial Park pavilion on the 3<sup>rd</sup> of July. The concert this year drew a very large crowd, as resident, Jeannie Marri and her band and entertainment continue to be extremely popular with our residents, friends and family.

The annual parade started at 11:00am - honoring Robert Levine as the Grand Marshall, followed by the Family Fair in Memorial Park from 12:30 pm to 4:30pm. There was food, drink, games, vendors and amusements for the whole family. The business and community organization sponsorships are key to the success of the 4<sup>th</sup> of July, as the borough does not allocate funds to this event.

Event Coordination has been the responsibility of the Recreation Director since 1997 although the Recreation Commission is not involved with the event. The responsibilities include: handling the arrangements for the annual concert, the parade participants and the park celebration activities; contracts for the parade entries, amusement vendors and market vendors including communication for day of event arrangements; correspondence to town businesses and organizations for event support, collection and processing of sponsorships received; development of event brochure or flyer and distribution of same; development of display advertisement in Town News; coordinate insurance coverage requirements; coordinate facility use and clean-up; processing receipt of all vendor fees; payment of all expenses; telephone calls related to the events; coordination with town departments – police, DPW; notification of committee meetings; preparation of a final budget analysis and follow-up with communication and appreciation to all volunteers and sponsors.

As of 2013, the event will be handled by the Special Events Committee with the recreation director as a committee member in an advisory position.

## Programs

### **Summer Playground Program**

Overall, the 2012 Summer Playground Program accomplished the goal of providing recreation, social and leisure activities in a safe environment for the children of River Edge. The number of participants by grade – Kindergarten – 38, 1<sup>st</sup> grade – 58, 2<sup>nd</sup> grade – 39, 3<sup>rd</sup> grade – 52, 4<sup>th</sup> grade- 39, 5<sup>th</sup> grade 35, sixth grade – 48 for a total enrollment of 309 children. Our program allows a child to be outdoors, to socialize on a fun and creative level and just play with classmates and friends in a safe semi-structured setting. That is the real purpose of the program. The 2012 fees were increased to \$140 per participant to cover all costs of the camp program. No funding is received from the Borough budget for this Playground Program. Dore Ann Minervinni, our Camp Director, for the third year, was once again excellent in the position. She continues to handle her responsibilities in a very professional manner, managing the over 45 staff members, the children and the parents. Bus trips and importing entertainment is costly, therefore the staff developed more in-camp activities and theme days that are less costly but creative and fun for the children.

Forty-four staff members rounded out the seasonal employees hired for the five weeks. Training took place the day before camp started with a classroom session including the viewing of the Joint Insurance Fund Video – 101 Days of Summer – which is required for seasonal employees and an on-site training at Memorial Park. Employees sign a staff guideline which lists the expectations of the employees. Each employee received a mid-session review and evaluation of performance with suggestions for improvement. At the end of the five weeks – those who still needed improvement were given an additional review.

### **Overview of the Playground Program**

The program hours remained the same as previous years - 9:00am to 12:00noon, Monday through Friday for five weeks and continues to be the best formula for success.

The Playground Program provides a place for children to be children, to play, socialize and have fun with established friends and to make new friends. The playground staff priority continues to be the safety and security of the children. Counselors are assigned children for whom they are responsible every day and at all times during the program. The parents are required to bring their child into the park for check-in with the child's designated counselor and at that check-in, an ID badge is clipped to the child's t-shirt.

The use of colored River Edge Recreation t-shirts for each grade level is an additional measure to further the safety and security of our playground program children. The counselors continue to wear the bright yellow staff shirts, which once again are visible from afar and children and parents know that these are staff members in the park. At the end of camp, the parent or designated (in writing) guardian is required to come into the park and checkout the child with the designated counselor. This system has worked for the last nine years and will remain in affect. To secure the safety of the children and parents, crossing Continental Avenue, the Commission through the Police Department hires a crossing guard who is stationed at the entrance of the park near the Ambulance Service building. This additional security measure has been extremely successful and relieved much of the congestion along Continental Avenue at the morning drop-off and noon pick-up from the park.

On a daily basis, each grade level rotated to each of the following activities for approximately 30 minutes: 1) Board games 2) Playground 3) Structured sport/play activities 4) Free Play 5) Snack time. Arts and crafts coordinated by Jody Lenkel for the fourth year, is an activity that the children look

forward to as they make substantial craft items that can give the children a sense of accomplishment and pride.

In addition to the daily activities, our special programs included musical magic entertainment, science/potions story telling, ice skating at the Ice House for 2<sup>nd</sup> - 6<sup>th</sup> grade; face painting day for all children, obstacle course, field day relays, varied theme days, the popular counselor carnival, Bergen Batting Cages trip, bowling at Bowler City in Hackensack and for the Kindergarten - 2<sup>nd</sup> - Bounce U in Paramus. A special bus trip to see the Jackals Baseball Team has been a favorite. A separate fee is charged for all activities outside of the park.

### **USA Sport Institute – Camps and Programs**

This institute is a professional sports provider that has worked with the Recreation Commission for the past seven years. US Sports Institute is at the forefront of providing quality sports camps and programs, working with community based organizations. The institute enables each camper to grow in an atmosphere that promotes integrity, self-esteem, positive values and good sportsmanship. The Commission has had a great experience and success with this turnkey operation which provides a variety of sports programming for all ages and ability levels to our resident children. The Sports Squirts (3-5 year olds) participants experience a variety of sports including lacrosse, soccer, basketball, t-ball floor hockey and parachute games in a safe, structured, fun environment. Since the borough sport leagues start for those in Kindergarten, this program allows younger children the opportunity to participate in town recreation activities.

The Sports Squirt t-ball and Sport Squirts soccer were offered for the first time this year in the spring with a one hour class a week for seven weeks in Memorial Park along with the regular Sports Squirts in the summer for one full week. These programs were well attended and will be expanded in 2013 in the spring and fall. The Multi-Sports 5-7 and 7-14 age group offers an opportunity to experience fifteen sports in a positive, low pressure educational environment. This program was offered in August right after the Playground Program ended and was well received and will be offered again in 2013. Golf has been popular as it introduces the sport using oversized club heads and larger golf balls so as to increase confidence and enjoyment.

The staff of the USA Sport Group is fully qualified and each coach is an inspiring role model for our children. A user fee of \$10 per participant is received by the Commission from US Sports Group at the end of each camp. An amount of \$2331 was received from the spring- summer and fall camps which were deposited in the Park and Field Maintenance Trust Fund.

Looking forward to 2013, a new program for 2-3 year olds – Parent and Me–Sports will be offered in the Spring and Summer.

### **Adult Basketball - Volleyball – Soccer**

These programs are available to River Edge residents on a drop-in basis with a no-fee registration-waiver /release form required and is held at the River Dell Middle School gym. The programs have run smoothly for many years and at no cost to the borough. Volleyball is played on Monday evenings, Basketball on Tuesdays and Soccer on Wednesday evenings from November through March. Each night the programs run from 9:00pm to 10:30pm. A volunteer for each program; Laura Goff – volleyball, Bill Hamilton –basketball, Chris Ilg – soccer -monitors the registration and the management of the program for the Recreation Commission.

### **Adult Softball**

The Men's Softball Program has been in existence for thirty years. The program has been managed by Jim Conway for the past thirteen years. The men's softball program has been the Recreation Commission's most popular adult activity with one hundred twenty-eight participants registering this year. Men's Softball is offered to residents, twenty-five years of age and older. Games are played during

the week usually on Tuesday, Wednesday or Thursday beginning at the end of April and ending with playoffs, the first week of August. The annual cookout for these games has become very popular and very much appreciated by the players and their families. The Fall Men's Softball League managed by Jimmy Teehan for the past three years, carries the same requirements as the spring/ summer league. The schedule for the games changed this year to Tuesday- Wednesdays Thursdays after Soccer at KBG field from August to the end of October, with 84 players participating in 2012.

The Women's Softball Program which was started in 2005 with the approval of the Recreation Commission was managed by Sharon Basil this year with 43 residents participating this past season. The teams play during the months of late June, July and August primarily on Friday nights.

The Men's Softball Leagues and the Women's League contributed \$2,550 to the field maintenance trust fund in 2012 based on the ten dollar per participant fee which was established by the Recreation Commission for all leagues that use River Edge fields.

### **Tennis**

The River Edge Tennis courts located behind the Public Library are for River Edge residents' use. The courts were re-constructed in 2010 and as a result there has been an increase in use by our residents. The lock system which requires a pass code to enter the courts has resulted in additional memberships and funding to maintain the courts. The pass code will be changed annually and if needed, semi-annually.

This year tennis courts were maintained by Carl Etter, Park Attendant, whose salary was covered by the membership and user fees\*. The tennis membership requires a River Edge Tennis Photo ID badge and membership fee of \$35 for an individual and \$55 for a family available through the Recreation Department.

The large pine trees on the west side of the courts should have been taken down during 2010 construction of the courts, when the old fencing was removed giving complete access to the trees. The Shade Tree Commission would not approve the tree removal at that time. The new courts are now suffering from the sap droppings and debris from these trees as was the case with the old courts. This year, Commission Chairman and Vice Chair met with the Shade Tree Commission members to discuss the removal of the trees. Shade Tree agreed to take on this project but required placement of funds for re-planting prior to take down. This project will be presented by the Shade Tree Commission as a budget item in the Open Space requests.

The Tennis Clinics are held on two days during the week to give more flexibility to the schedule. The clinics were offered to River Edge residents on Wednesdays and Thursdays from 3:30pm to dusk beginning in April with spring, summer and fall sessions. The clinics have been managed by Barry Ruback for the past twenty-two years and have continually been filled with participants for each of the sessions of spring, summer and fall.

A user fee\* of \$10 per participant each clinic session is added to the registration fee. These fees held in the recreation dedicated trust account – tennis line are used to maintain the tennis courts.

### **Bus Trips**

The Recreation Commission sponsored two casino bus trips to Resorts in Atlantic City and one to the Sands Casino in Bethlehem, Pa. The Commission has kept the cost of the trips at \$30 which in most cases covers the cost of the bus depending on the number of participants. The participation is dwindling for these trips and there will be a need to discuss an increase of the fee. It also appears that the more local casinos such as Pennsylvania are drawing more people due to the travel time- a two and

a half hour trip to AC versus a one and a half hour trip to Pa.

Additionally, in December, the Commission sponsored a group bus trip to New York City for the Radio City Christmas Spectacular Performance and for the children and their parents this year, the performance of the Grinch, Who Stole Christmas at the Madison Square Garden Theatre.

As stated in the highlights of 2012- our senior residents have very limited social and recreational activities within the Borough, especially without a central location for organized gathering and the presentation of scheduled senior programs. The Commission will look to offer weekday bus trips in 2013 geared to this population. The Commission is planning to send out to all seniors, an announcement of the intent to offer weekday bus trips and to seek feedback as to their interests.

Saddle River Tours has provided the Recreation Commission with superior bus service for the past nineteen years. The busses have been very clean and in superb, new condition. The drivers have been extremely courteous and very capable in all driving aspects- from on time pick-up to safe driving to delivery and return.

### **Central Athletic Council**

The key project of the Recreation Commission and the Central Athletic Council was the training of all volunteer coaches in concussion in youth sports – head injury prevention and control.

As stated in the highlights section, to certify as many coaches as possible in a short time period, the Commission hired Dr. Catherine Mazzola of the New Jersey Concussion Center to train our coaches in concussion awareness. Those coaches not able to attend and all future youth coaches are to receive certification by an online Center for Disease Control –youth sport head injury prevention education tutorial and test. The CDC developed the Heads Up: Concussion In Youth Sports initiative to offer information about concussions to coaches, parents, and athletes involved in youth sports. The Heads Up initiative provides important information on preventing, recognizing, and responding to a concussion - ensuring the health and safety of young athletes. All volunteer youth coaches are required to submit the CDC concussion certification that shows successful completion of the on-line training.

The River Edge Central Athletic Council is a non-profit organization established for the purpose of promoting our youth sports, which are organized and operated under the auspices of the Recreation Commission. The Council consists of the presidents of the sports leagues or programs - River Dell Soccer Association, Little League Baseball, Jr. Baseball, REGAL basketball, REGAL softball, Jr. Wrestling, Rolier Hockey, Jr. Football, Cheerleading and Boys Basketball, all of whom are trustees with voting rights. The Recreation Commission Director and Chairman are non- voting trustees. The Central Athletic Council as an incorporated entity is in its ninth year of existence.