

Amid a struggling economy and learning to do more with less, the Sumter County Parks and Recreation Department has seen another successful year come to an end. The youth athletic programs continue to be a model of success thanks to professional leadership, quality volunteer coaches, community support and parental involvement. There are exciting things on the horizon as well in the non-athletic areas that should enhance the overall parks and recreation experience for the citizens of Sumter County.

The 2011 calendar year began with youth basketball. Coach Dwight Harris, athletic manager for the SCPRD, began his 1st season in this position by overseeing this program. All games were played at the Columns at Boone Park Community Center. The leagues included: 8 & Under co-ed, 9 - 11 Girls, 10 & Under Boys and 12 & Under Boys. The post season all-star teams also saw tremendous success with the 8 & Under team, coached by Ronesha Brown, winning the GRPA State Championship. Once Basketball was completed, the youth baseball season went into full swing at the Sumter County Regional Park. Approximately 400 youngsters were involved in four leagues of play. An exciting season was enjoyed by all and three post season all-star teams were formed to compete in GRPA and Little League sanctioned events. The 8U team finished as the District runners up and advanced to state tournament play. The 10 & Under team finished as the runners up in the state GRPA tournament. The Little League Minor and Major Division teams competed well at the District tournaments in Columbus. Expectations for the Little League program is at an all-time high as we look toward the 2012 season. In the Fall sports season, over 650 youngsters were involved in either football, soccer or cheerleading. After very successful regular seasons, two of our soccer teams won District GRPA championships. The U-12 and U14 teams advanced to state tournaments in Columbia County. The 12 & Under football team won the GRPA District title in Tifton and advanced all the way to the state championship game before being eliminated by a 6-0 score to Thomson.

2011 was a banner year for the Sumter County Gymnastics Academy team. The level 2 and level 3 teams placed either 1st or 2nd in every meet of the 2010-2011 season and capped off their season with a trip to the AAU Nationals in Orlando, Florida. The SCGA girls put their stamp on the season ending event with dozens of top 10 finishes. The highlight of the trip was a National Championship on floor exercise for level 3 competitor Ashleigh Estes who scored a 9.375 on the event. Coach Melissa Moore, along with assistant coach Rainey Lindsey accompanied the SCGA girls who were a part of TEAM GEORGIA at this AAU National Level event. The

beginning of the 2011-2012 season saw most of the SCGA gymnasts move up to a higher level. In November, coach Melissa Moore became Melissa Singley, as she married Ronald Singley in a beautiful ceremony at the Bison Valley Lodge. Congratulations to all of the girls and coaches in the gymnastics program.

In non-athletic programs; the summer swim program was at full capacity with 185 participants learning to swim at the Barlow Street Pool. The summer day camp program had 81 participants who enjoyed games and events and capped off their summer with a trip to Wild Adventures theme park in Valdosta. Hundreds of visitors enjoyed our neighborhood parks throughout Sumter County this past year. Birthday parties and special events at the Columns Community Center and the Sumter County Fairgrounds were at an all time high as well in 2011. The Nature Trail at the Sumter County Regional Park is a 1.9 mile walk through the woods and there are high hopes that this trail will see much improvement in 2012. A \$100,000 grant has been applied for through the Georgia Department of Natural Resources to expand this trail to 3.1 miles in length. It would also be certified as an NCAA and Georgia High School Association cross country course. The funds would be used to improve the quality of the trail, clear additional land, pave a trail head and holding area for cross country runners, build a bridge over ball-park creek, create a primitive campsite and educational area for local scout troops and plant over a hundred native trees along the trail.

Our full-time staff continues their professional development efforts. Executive Director; Tim Estes graduated from the George F. Harris Executive Management School this past year. This program, offered through the University of Georgia, is designed for upper level management personnel in the parks and recreation industry to further develop their planning and project management skills. Mr. Estes was also elected as the GRPA District Three Commissioner and will serve on the state Board of Trustees. Jeff Fussell continued his C.E.U requirements for the Certified Pool Operator's license. Jeff was also selected as the annual conference committee representative for District three for 2012-2013. Melissa Singley and Tiffany Parker attended the AAU National Coaches conference in New Orleans this year.

As we enter a new year, we want to thank all of the kids, parents, volunteers and businesses who have helped to make the SCPRD such a success. We look forward to working with the new Sumter County Administrator; Mr. Bill Twomey, who comes to us from Adel-Cook County, Georgia. We want to thank the Sumter County Board of Commissioners for their

continued support and their belief that recreation is an investment in their citizens. It is our hope that the local, state and national economy will begin to improve and that further strides can be made in the field of parks and recreation.