

SENECA FALLS RECREATION DEPARTMENT



For more than 50 years, beginning in the early 1960's and continuing today, the Seneca Falls Community Center has played an integral role in the planning and organization of Seneca Falls Youth Sports. The Center

was originally built to offer an opportunity for students to find a safe place to spend leisure time with friends after school and on weekends. In 1973, Tony Petroccia was hired as the new Recreation Director and he quickly set out to expand the services offered to town residents by developing and implementing many organized youth sports programs and leagues. During his tenure as Director, Tony implemented youth programs in soccer, basketball, baseball and softball as well as many other youth sports activities. Also developed during this time was the NYSCA Coaching Certification program – a program that still exists today and one that ensures all coaches working with youth sports teams in Seneca Falls are properly trained and informed, enabling them to provide a more positive atmosphere for young athletes. Tony also initiated the Friendship Games which was an exchange program with other communities. Tony left the Community Center in 1991 after taking a new position as Director of Recreational Services at New York Chiropractic College.

Christine Yonge was hired as the new Recreation Director in 1991 and spent the next few years improving the many youth sports programs that were offered. During this time, talk of a new Community Center began. Meetings were held and some early schematics were developed and drawn up. However, many obstacles stood in the way and plans were put on hold. Christine left the Community Center in 1997 after a successful 6 year run as Director.

Al Loucks was hired in 1997 as the new Director of the Community Center. He immediately set out to develop the programs further and to further develop a

“Community Center” mentality. He also went to work on moving forward with the construction of a new facility. While he was able to again bring the idea of a new Center back to the forefront, the project was left on the table for another time. Al left the Center in 1998 to pursue other opportunities.

The Town and its Recreation Commission decided in late-1998 to re-classify the Recreation Director’s job. After many meetings and discussions, it was decided to change the job description, as well as the qualifications, for the Director of the Town’s Parks and Recreation services. The new title was Commissioner of Parks and Recreation and Jim Spina was hired in January of 1999. Immediately, Jim was tasked by the Town Board to get started on developing plans for constructing a new Community Center. He was able to get the Recreation Commission and Town Board members together and a plan was implemented such that the Town opened its new Community Center in October of 2001. During this time, staff was hired to maintain the new facility as well as all other Parks and Recreation facilities.

Due to the added space at the new Community Center, most youth sports programs were expanded to younger ages such that introduction to the programs happened earlier and more often. With this expansion it was decided that the Town needed an Asst. Recreation Director. It was then that Wendy Caraher’s role at the Center was expanded and she took on the added duties as Jim’s Assistant. Jim and Wendy continue today in their roles at the Community Center, handling the responsibility of developing and implementing new programs while also continuing to be the stewards of the many programs that have been offered for so many years. In the 17 years that Jim has been Commissioner, most if not all programs have seen expansion and improvement. Many new programs have been offered as well so that the staple of programs offered today include soccer, basketball, boys’ and girls’ lacrosse, wrestling and kickball. The Community Center also serves as a partner to Seneca Falls Little League and Seneca Falls Jr. Football and Cheerleading. The Center has also added many non-athletic programs to its list of offerings while also expanding adult use of the facility. It is, today, a true Community Center.

The Community Center values its relationship and connection to the many Varsity, JV and Modified sports programs offered at Mynderse Academy and the consistent success that so many experience. We are glad to be valued for playing an important role in the development of Mynderse Academy athletes and look forward to continuing that role in the future.