

RECREATION PROGRAM PLANNING TODAY

RICHARD G. KRAUS

Creation _____ gram _____ Planning _____ Today _____

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PREFACE

Traditionally, a course in recreation programming has prepared students for positions as leaders in publicly sponsored playgrounds and community centers. Programs emphasized serving children and youth, and the activities presented consisted chiefly of sports and games, arts and crafts, and similar pastimes.

Recreation Program Planning Today views recreation programming in a sharply different light—as a reflection of significant changes that have taken place in the leisure-service field. These changes include:

1. *The diversification of the field itself.* Today, recreation agencies include at least eight distinctly different types of organizations, such as public, voluntary nonprofit, private, commercial, armed forces, campus, corporate/employee, and therapeutic recreation services. Ideally, students should become familiar with recreation program planning approaches in several of these different settings.

2. *The variety of populations served.* Contemporary leisure-service programs must serve all age groups, with increased emphasis on adult and aging populations. In addition, new kinds of family constellations, including single adults, the physically or mentally disabled and other special populations, require innovative recreation programming approaches.

3. *Expanded range of program activities.* Today, broadened public tastes and leisure interests necessitate a fuller range of program offerings. Beyond this, many recreation agencies or administrative units today offer varied human-service or health-related functions; typically, recreation staff members may coordinate services related to education, counseling, transportation, vocational development, and discount purchasing.

4. *Alternative philosophical orientations.* In addition to the familiar “quality-of-life” approach, a number of other philosophical orientations to recreation programming have emerged recently. These include the “marketing” and “human-services” models of recreation service, as well as several other approaches which are discussed in Chapter 4.

If recreation is to justify adequate support in today's tight economic climate, it *must* be goal-oriented and purposeful. It must have clearly stated objectives, and it must demonstrate accountability through a systematic evaluation process and full documentation of outcomes. At the same time, recreation must respond to the needs and interests of participants and must provide real pleasure and enjoyment—surely the most compelling motivation for taking part in recreation.

In preparing this book, I divided my original text, *Recreation Today: Program Planning and Leadership*, into two separate books covering the two key aspects of the subject. Chapter 3 of this book presents a model of recreation program planning and implementation based both on several other models appearing in the literature and on the actual programs of dozens of leisure-service agencies. Each of the following chapters deals with successive steps of the eight-stage programming process.

The book steers a middle course between a highly practical and “how-to-do-it” approach and a more conceptual or theoretical approach. Much of its content reflects current writing about social change and the structure of organizations in contemporary life, including information on networking and participative management approaches. At the same time, the book provides numerous practical guidelines and examples of programming in various types of leisure-service agencies. Emphasis is placed on the process of developing programs rather than on the activities themselves. The reader will find a wide selection of program activities in the book's companion volume, *Recreation Leadership Today*.

The questions and suggested student projects that appear at the end of chapters are designed to help readers develop applied skills in analyzing problem situations or evolving program plans that are innovative and fit today's changing needs and societal circumstances. It is not expected that all students undertake all of these projects. Instead, they may be assigned to individuals or small groups well in advance of the date when a chapter would be covered in class. At that time, presentations could be made to help illustrate or enrich the text material in the chapter itself.

I hope that both instructors and students will find this text useful and enjoyable—both for specific course purposes and as a valuable addition to their professional libraries.

Acknowledgments

Appreciation is extended to the following organizations and individuals who assisted in preparing this book by sending brochures, program reports, manuals, and photographs, or by providing other useful information.

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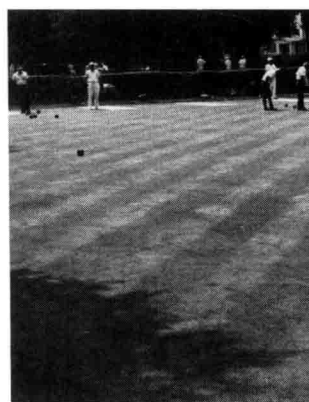
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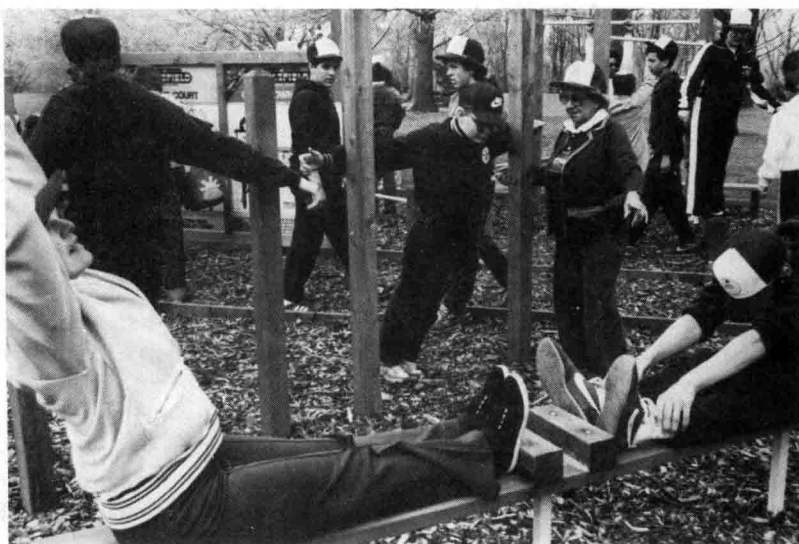
Recreation _____
Program _____
Planning _____
Today _____

PART 1

Introduction to Recreation Program Planning



Sports and fitness are among the most popular of all recreation program activities. Here, boys and girls compete in the Hershey Track and Field Youth Program, while crewmen compete at basketball in crowded quarters on the USS *Mount Hood*. Participants take part in ice-skating at the South Mountain Arena, while others "work out" in a fitness court and lawn bowl, all in Essex County, New Jersey.



Recreation Program_____

Planning in_____

a Changing Society_____

“Well, Jim, we’re very excited that the Mayfield Village Board has agreed to hire you as our first recreation director,” said Mary Carter, head of the community’s Recreation Committee.

“I’m excited about it too,” replied Jim Schmidt. “You’re taking a bit of a chance, hiring me right out of college. But I’ve had good experience in other programs like this, and feel that I’m well-qualified.”

Mary Carter smiled. “We think you’re the person for the job. But let me warn you, people are going to expect a lot from this program, although our budget will be small to start with. Now, the Village Board will be meeting in three weeks. We’ll want a beginning statement from you—not a final plan, of course, but some of your ideas about what Mayfield’s recreation program should include, and how we ought to develop it. You’ll be able to give us some ideas at that time, won’t you?”

“Of course I will,” said Jim. “I’ve already started on it. It’s going to be a real challenge.”

Over the past three decades, recreation has emerged as a major aspect of modern life in all industrialized societies. Thanks to the growth of leisure time, economic capability, and favorable attitudes that encourage varied forms of play, the provision of organized recreation service today represents a highly significant form of community service and career opportunity.

While many of the pursuits that people engage in during their leisure time are casual and unstructured, many other activities are sponsored by various community agencies. At the heart of such organizations is the task of planning, organizing, and conducting diversified program activities and services. Russell has written:

The program is what recreation services are all about. All else—personnel, supplies, areas and facilities, budgets, public relations—exists primarily to see that the program occurs and that people enjoy participating. Planning is the tool that makes programs happen.¹

The purpose of this book is to provide the reader with a full understanding of the nature of recreation program planning, both in terms of its underlying concepts and the wide range of programs typically emphasized by different kinds of leisure-service agencies today. In addition to such understandings, the book's purpose is also to present the reader with an analysis of different types of program activities and formats, and to examine the skills involved in designing and implementing programs.

DEFINITION OF TERMS

Before describing the social factors that have created a dramatically new climate for recreation programming, it is necessary to define the two terms that are used throughout this text: *recreation* and *leisure*.

Recreation is generally viewed as the act of participating in voluntarily chosen, pleasurable activities in one's free time. It has also been increasingly defined as the emotional experience involved in participation rather than simply the act of taking part. Recreation must also be seen as a social institution in the sense that it represents a major economic force in society, an important area of governmental responsibility, and a source of employment for millions of men and women.

Leisure may be narrowly defined as unobligated time—that is, time free from the responsibilities of work, self-maintenance responsibilities, or other mandated tasks. In a broader sense, leisure represents freedom and the opportunity for self-enrichment through participation in a wide range of pursuits and hobbies, including many of a cultural or community-service nature. Leisure may also be seen as a state of mind and as a source of creative and spiritual values.

Many educators and social scientists prefer to use the word *leisure* when discussing this field, and to be concerned with its philosophical and psychological implications. In contrast, most members of the public are accustomed to using the term *recreation* and most agencies that provide such services refer to the services as *recreation*. In actual practice, the term *leisure-service agency* is usually regarded as synonymous with *recreation provider*, and is used in that way throughout this text.

UNDERSTANDING THE NATURE OF RECREATION PROGRAMMING

Having clarified these basic terms, we may then ask, "Exactly what is recreation programming?"

At its simplest level, it consists of the process of providing opportunities for recreational participation to the public at large, or to selected clienteles or target audiences. It includes varied types of activities—such as sports, games, hobbies, arts and crafts, music, drama and dance, or social events—which meet the needs of participants for enjoyable leisure activity.

It is essential to realize that programs are not an end in themselves. As Edginton, Hanson, and Compton point out, *people* are the real reasons for the existence of leisure-service agencies, and should be considered the focal point of their services:

Programs are the tools of the recreation and leisure professional—the vehicle for service delivery. Through the use of programs, values are formed, skills developed, and processes learned.²

Beyond this, the reader should recognize that recreation programming involves more than simply planning and carrying out group recreation activities. As later chapters will show, it encompasses a number of other important functions, such as the provision of facilities for self-directed use, the assistance and coordination of other community leisure-service programs, leisure education and counseling, and even the provision of related nonrecreational programs and services.

Past Development of Community Recreation

During the early years of its development as a form of organized community service in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, recreation programming tended to be heavily child- and youth-oriented and to be carried on primarily in playgrounds and community centers. It was provided chiefly by municipal or other local, tax-supported recreation and park agencies, with limited opportunities offered by voluntary, industrial, or other specialized types of organizations.

At that time, community recreation was generally regarded as a significant form of social service, designed chiefly to meet the needs of the urban poor and newcomers to America's changing cities. During the period of the 1920s through the 1960s—as it merged with the growing urban and county parks movement—it came to be conceptualized chiefly as an *amenity*, a fun-oriented activity that contributed to the quality of life, but did not have other important social purposes or outcomes.

During this period, a philosophy of municipal or community recreation service developed, which stressed the need to provide equal leisure opportunities to all, regardless of age, sex, race, or religious background. Despite this philosophy, it was evident that most publicly sponsored recreation programs tended to serve middle-class, white populations, and that facilities and program activities in many lower-income or minority-group neighborhoods tended to be inade-