



# CITY OF WILLMAR 2006 ANNUAL REPORT



City Attorney  
City Clerk-Treasurer  
**Community Ed & Recreation**  
Cultural Liaison  
Finance  
Fire  
Planning & Development Services  
Police  
Public Works

# Annual Report

## 2006

Lifelong Learning φ Community Involvement φ Efficient Use of Resources



**Willmar  
Community**  
Education & Recreation

### Report includes:

- \* **Message from the Director**
- \* **Mission**
- \* **Advisory Council**
- \* **Coordinator's Reports**
- \* **Financial Statement**

Mayor Heitke and Members of the Council;

It is again a pleasure as Director of Community Education and Recreation to report on our activities for 2006. Most of this information was reported by a great coordination staff that we have in place within our department. They are some of the finest professionals I have had an opportunity to work with in my 19 year career in this field. As I mention our coordinator's I need to mention the support staff that is a tremendous support for all of us. Becky Sorenson, Colleen Ruby, Lynette Christianson and now our newest staff member Lori Boros all do great work with being the first contact for our very diverse public.

Our facilities continue to be utilized by the community in record numbers. Well over a hundred different organizations utilized the many fine public facilities this community has to offer. They play in our gyms and on our fields, they rent shelters, go swimming in pools, lakes and aquatic centers, they play cards or dance at the senior center and utilize our facilities for many other fun, educational and recreational reasons. The community is very blessed to have such fine facilities to access. That being said, we need to constantly be aware of the needs our facilities will have related to maintenance, enhancements as well as what gaps in facilities that may arise with our changing demographics. Our Public Works staff and custodians should be commended for the condition they keep our facilities in.

CER staff will continue to reach out to the community to collaborate with the many asset developing organizations this community has to offer. Our resources will go much further if we look for the relationships that will maximize the tax supported programming with the great volunteer base this community has to offer. Our examples of this practice are evident daily. We work with many different groups throughout the year to try and make a difference in the life of all community residents. Given our changing demographics that is even more important than ever before that we search out new partners as we continue the work that made Willmar an All-America Community.

I would also like to discuss the importance of our advisory council and how they are volunteering their time at our monthly meetings to address the needs of the community. We look at both the programming pieces and the facilities and ask them to be the eyes and ears of the community. With their assistance we are able to meet the needs of the community by having a better understanding of those needs as voiced by this volunteer council.

The following pages will give you the policy makers an idea of all the exciting things that took place within WCER in 2006. It is our pleasure to supply this information for you to review.

Steve Brisendine  
WCER Director

# The Mission

of the Willmar Community Education and Recreation Department is to generate, support, and encourage life-long learning opportunities in areas of education, personal growth and leisure activities.

Willmar Community Education and Recreation programs evolve to meet the needs of area residents and surrounding communities through collaboration and non-duplication of services.

Steve Brisendine, Director  
Rob Baumgarn  
Lynette Christenson  
Veronica Collins  
Janet Flick

LeAnne Freeman  
Kevin Madsen  
Ann Rislov  
Colleen Ruby  
Tammy Rudningen

Joanna Schrupp  
Becky Sorenson  
Nick Thompson  
Ann Trochlil  
Jodi Wambeke

## Advisory Council Members

Andy Bjur, Chair  
Chris Bennett  
Dewey Bock  
Marilyn Bolin  
Lisa DeCathelineau  
Ron Christianson  
Edel Fernandez

Brandt Haglund  
Tori Leitch  
Anita Nelson  
Eric Setrum  
Cindy Swenson  
Sandi Unger  
Raul Vazquez



**Willmar  
Community**  
Education & Recreation

WCER is community based and consumer driven. Involvement of community members in the process is essential. The Advisory Council is responsible for seeing the Community Education and Recreation programs serve the interests and concerns of the community. The Advisory Council consists of members who live, work or attend school in the Willmar area community. Council members represent several different age groups, neighborhoods, organizations and agencies in the community.

# Coordinator's Reports

NICK THOMPSON



## Aquatic Center

The summer of 2006 was our second full season at the pool. Attendance was very strong, improving from last year by more than 1,000 people in part due to our new season passes. Some of the data that we collected:

- φ We had over 15,000 people come and use the facility!
- φ Our best week of the season was the week of SonShine Music Festival. Each day we went over the 500 patron mark.

## Season Highlights:

This was the first year we offered season passes. For weeks at the beginning of the season, families were lined up to get their picture taken for the season pass. The pass was more popular than even we had hoped.

Overall, the season went well. We learned that when the weather is cool (75 ° or below), the numbers drop dramatically. When it is hot and humid, it is the place to be. The most important concern that we have as a staff is the safety of the swimmers. I'm proud to say that the staff we have at the pool is top notch and professional. We pride ourselves on safety.

## Adult Recreation

In my second full year as the Adult Recreation Coordinator, I was able to build upon the strong programs that were handed over to me and build upon last year's lessons learned. Numbers in almost all sports have been up 5%-10% on average. There were 70 volleyball teams in leagues and 25 volleyball teams in tournaments. Basketball offered similar growth with 28 league teams and 14 teams in our annual tournament, both marked increases from last year. Our already strong softball program also increased to 83 league teams. We also added a new annual "Under the Lights" all-night softball tournament that was already successful in its first year.

We are fortunate to have the availability of gyms at the Senior High, Junior High, Kennedy and Roosevelt for our adult leagues. The City Auditorium continues to be used for leagues and other programs and is a great asset to our department and the community. Swansson Softball/ Baseball/Soccer complex is heavily used by our department Monday through Friday from April to October. Public Works does an excellent job of maintaining this complex for us.



A portion of my responsibilities have been focusing on expanding the Adaptive Recreation opportunities offered. Numbers of participants and classes have been steadily rising with great positive feed-back from participants and care providers.

# Coordinator's Reports

**ROB BAUMGARN**

## **Youth Recreation:**

During the summer of 2006, we brought a new era to youth baseball in Willmar. This was our second year of having parent volunteers as coaches. This went over well, but being the first year of the new program, we had some bumps along the way. This was a very successful year for our recreation baseball program. Similar to last year, we combined efforts with the New London-Spicer and Atwater Recreation Departments to form a youth league for grades 3-6. This year Belgrade and Brooten joined the league, giving the players the opportunity to play other players and see what it is like to go to other towns.



With our 7<sup>th</sup>-9<sup>th</sup> grade league, we met with fourteen local communities to discuss the possibilities of having a 7<sup>th</sup> grade league and combined the 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> graders together to form their own league. This was a great idea; the 7<sup>th</sup> grade league had twelve teams and the 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> grade league had thirteen teams. At the end of the season, we had a league tournament for both leagues. NLS hosted the 7<sup>th</sup> grade league, and Willmar hosted the 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> grade league tournament. It was a great way to finish the season.

## **Youth Football:**

With the fall approaching, so is football. This year, youth football opened their doors to ACGC. ACGC has a strong football community, and we are glad that with the strong efforts of some parents, they were able to form two teams to join our league. This year we had a total of 12 teams in the league which includes Morris, NL-S, ACGC and Willmar.

The biggest plus this year was the development of the new youth football/soccer fields near Roosevelt Elementary. With the dirt work completed and the grass seed applied this spring, we were optimistic that we could play on the new fields this fall. With a good growing season, that dream came true. In the future, the site will have lights and bleachers and, of course, a lot of people using the fields!



# Coordinator's Reports

## TAMMY RUDNINGEN

The past year has been another busy one! I have continued teaching the high school Youth Service class at Willmar Senior High. Nearly 80 eleventh and twelfth grade students enrolled for the 06-07 school year. These students learn while they volunteer in our pre K- 8 classrooms. The classroom teachers enjoy the extra hand in the classroom and the Youth Service students benefit from the many learning opportunities that occur. Nearly 2,000 volunteer hours took place during these three terms.



Prairie Fire Theatre returned to Willmar for the tenth year in a row to put together two successful shows. The popular shows involved about 150 local youth. The touring actors were also able to visit all of the first and second grade classrooms in the district as a result of a cooperative effort with the Willmar Area Arts Council.

Funding from a 21<sup>st</sup> Century Learning Center Grant and a grant from PACT 4 have made several before and after school programs available to many kids at all four elementary schools. These programs promote positive self esteem and academic success for all participants.

A collaborative effort continues with Prairie Woods Environmental Learning Center that allows for several outdoor hands-on learning experiences for children and their families.

The Rural Youth Leadership Conference for students in grades 6-8 was a huge success with maximum enrollment and excellent participation. The Rural Youth Leaders continue to do a variety of “random acts of kindness” at the 6<sup>th</sup>-8<sup>th</sup> grade levels. One of their favorite projects was the “Books for our Buddies” book drive. Another is the annual cookie bake at the Junior High. The students bake about 200-300 cookies, serve them to the building staff and then donate the leftovers to a local group in need.

Academy Camp was attended by 97 students from several area school districts. Although attendance was down from last year, all feedback indicated that the students and teachers enjoyed this Gifted and Talented summer program. Popular classes included “Greek Mythology” and “Trip Around the World.” Some changes will be implemented in 2007 to encourage more participation.

Summer band and orchestra continue to be popular summer offerings. The Junior High Students particularly enjoy marching at Valley Fair as the grand finale of their summer lessons.



Athletic camps are also popular options for our youth. Volleyball, Tennis and Basketball continue to be well attended. The Heart & Sole Running Club is a popular option for students in grades 4-6. They love learning about health and fitness while they prepare to participate in the Foot Lake 4!

General adult enrichment offerings continue to evolve as the needs arise in the community. Several new classes were offered in each activity brochure. There has been a trend of decreased enrollment in adult enrichment classes. This appears to be a reflection of the hectic schedules that many community members maintain.

# Coordinator's Reports

LEANNE FREEMAN

## WHO ARE SENIORS AND WHY ARE THEY SO IMPORTANT?

AARP defines seniors as adults 50 and over, many restaurants and other businesses define seniors as over 55 years of age and social security defines seniors at least 62 years of age.



The baby boomers are coming—75 million Americans were born between 1946 to 1964 (age of innocence). From 2010 to 2030, the 65+ population is projected to grow by 75% to over 69 million persons. By 2030 the boomers share of the total population will increase to 20%.

The most effective ways to understand the needs of seniors and boomers is to broaden the definition of seniors, to seek advice of seniors, to do quantitative research (statistically valid surveys), and to educate and train our staff.

To get a good concrete assessment on adults over 45 years and older, we need to gather feedback by ages. We need to gather information from groups; 45 to 54, 55 to 64, 65 to 74 and 75 years and older. This information needs to be geared to each age. Senior programs should be thought of in the same way that we think of youth age group populations.

### **What is our niche in delivering services to seniors?**

We need to do justice to our senior population by fulfilling the needs of the upcoming seniors and the needs of the existing seniors. To do this we have to acknowledge their differences.

Boomers lead a busy life and will primarily view retirement as the next stage in their lives to re-define. They also don't like to be called seniors, they are adults. Health club memberships for 55 years and over have increased over the past 12 years. Boomers will spend the vast majority of their assets on travel/leisure. These factors need to be addressed when programming for the boomer generation; demographics, attitudes, education and income levels.

The older seniors enjoy being together to socialize, to visit, to play cards, to play bingo and to be entertained. They would sit with you all day and share stories and drink coffee.

One of the biggest challenges of Senior Centers nationwide will be to try to determine what the next generation of retirees is going to want in a Senior Center. Centers that don't plan for these numbers will only fail. Reaching out to boomers will be a challenge and we need to change the stereotype of Senior Center and be inclusive to several generations.

Are we as a Department or City boomer savvy and do we want to invest in our senior population? We expect to see another busy year in 2007, and we hope to reach out and invest in our senior population by continuing on a positive path for many years to come.

# Coordinator's Reports

**JODI WAMBEKE**



**Early Childhood Family Programs (ECFP)** continues to provide exceptional educational and support services to children in families in Willmar.

For 2006 our **Early Childhood Family Education** program has seen over 725 families that were involved in one or more of the 50 + classes, special events and open house. 'ECFE on Wheels' continues to see several families at WIC Clinics, Rice Hospital, Paz Y Esperanza, and, Jennie-O Turkey store and through home visits.

The **Family Literacy** program continues to get bigger and better. For 2006 this program is at maximum capacity with 10 adults and 15 children. The waiting list is at an all time high with 21 parents and 30 children. We are waiting to hear about potential grant dollars to expand this program for the 2007-2008 school year.

The continued collaboration with Public Health, Heartland Community Action, Child Care Resource and Referral has helped us to provide 5 sections of **Incredible Years** which is a parent program designed to strengthen parenting skills and prevent behavior problems in children 3 to 10 years of age. **Incredible Years** has seen over 50 families in 2006 and continues to grow as do our collaborations with community agencies.

**Kids Together Preschool** is going as strong as ever. We continue to work closely with Early Childhood Special Education and Family Literacy to provide preschool placements for children in those programs. This past school year we also implemented The Creative Curriculum that aligns with the Early Learning Standards that have been developed by the Minnesota Department of Education

The **Week of the Young Child**, which is April 23-27, is always an exciting time for us! For the past 6 years, Washington Learning Center Early Childhood Staff, along with Ridgewater College Student Senate and Kandiyohi County IEIC has provided the families in our community with **Family Fun Night**. This event sees over 700 families with young children each year. This past year the event was held on Monday, April 3<sup>rd</sup>..

# Coordinator's Reports

**ANN TROCHLIL**

## **Cardinal Kids Preschool**

September 2006 brought the start of a new year at Cardinal Kids Preschool. A maximum of 20 students were enrolled in Cardinal Kids for the beginning of the new school year. The program, which serves four year olds in their last year before kindergarten, is an inclusion program for students from the Early Childhood Special Education Department learning along with students from the community. Students receive a top-notch educational experience from certified teachers, specialists and staff. The educational



piece runs from 9 a.m. until 2:30 p.m. Monday through Friday with before and after school care being provided by Cardinal Place school age care program. We have had a successful start to our program and look forward to continuing to serve families in Willmar and the surrounding areas.

**ANN RISLOV**

## **21<sup>st</sup> Century Before & After School Programs**

Since 2002, Willmar Community Education and Recreation and Willmar Public Schools has administered quality before and after school programs for youth grades K-6 funded by the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Community Learning Centers Grant.

Our 21<sup>st</sup> Century programs are offered at Lincoln, Jefferson, Kennedy, and Roosevelt Elementary. These programs include morning enrichments, craft club, cardinal clubhouse, radical readers, math minds, and creative cartooning. During the 2005/2006 school year, over 700 youth participated in 21<sup>st</sup> Century programming.



All programs are offered free and bussing is provided at no cost to participants. This allows for all students to take part in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century programming. Our current 21<sup>st</sup> Century grant will end August 31, 2007. We have applied for a new grant and if successful will include programming for Early Childhood, Elementary, Junior High School, High School, and Parents

# Coordinator's Reports

## JANET FLICK

Willmar Adult Basic Education program includes two separate Willmar sites. The largest site is located at Washington Learning Center. The other site is located at Kandiyohi County Jail. Each program provides classes every week, twelve months a year. The Washington site is open nine hours a day with the exception of Friday when classes are from 8 AM to 1 PM. At Kandiyohi County Jail classes are provided one morning, two afternoons and two evenings a week.



Sixty percent of the learners in a typical class are male. The largest group of learners is between the ages of twenty-four and forty-four. Learners attend from a very few hours to those that come everyday, week after week. Some learners come to pass the GED examination and merely need to take a practice test, while others need more help in math, writing and reading for comprehension. We also help learners that cannot read. Many dislocated workers come to class to do a little brush up on all of their skills but primarily to better understand the computer. Another class is devoted on helping those that need to pass the written drivers test. Many of our new residents come to learn English. They spend time learning pronunciation, spelling, conversation, and how to read in English. Another focus is helping new residents pass the Citizenship test.

Adult Basic Education Funds comes from three sources. Those sources include: pre capita based on the population of the school district's census, state funds based on the number of hours students attend and federal funds based on the number of hours learners attend class.

Willmar is part of a larger consortium that includes nine school districts and two county jails. The state and federal mandates place emphasis on helping learners gain employment. It is the goal of all staff to help the learners achieve their educational goals and in turn help them lead a more successful life.



# Coordinator's Reports

**KEVIN MADSEN**

## **FLOOR ACTIVITIES AND REVENUES**

The Civic Center Arena continues in its purpose of meeting the wide range of community needs as a multi-purpose facility providing indoor ice skating and a large event and exhibition space. The facility, overall, attempts to provide a well-balanced blend of rentals, public options and access to most groups during ice season, and works to maintain a balance between ice and dry floor. Scheduling ice time between user groups and using maximum available time for promoting a healthy list of dry floor events requires considerable cooperation from all renters.

Dry floor activities continue to fill most weekends in March and April, with the Sunshine Festival the largest single event. Other dry floor events continue to represent a variety of endeavors, both for private business activity or community use.



Total ice usage by major renters declined by 212 hours for 2006. However, ice use revenues increased by approximately \$5,000. Dropping hours were Willmar Youth Hockey and Willmar Youth Hockey Tournaments. The addition of a Girls High School Junior Varsity team has increased the High School's usage. Diamond Edge Figure Skating also increased hours.

## **OPERATION AND MAINTENANCE ISSUES**

Much needed upgrades and repairs have been made to the air exhaust system in the Civic Center Arena, and many long over due repair projects were done with the addition of one full-time maintenance person. Civic Center management has devoted many hours to planning improvement projects at the Blue Line Arena and planning for the anticipated connection of the two buildings in 2007. Many projects are under way and are worked on in between the many events that occur at the complex. Patience and perseverance are keys in the accomplishment of these ongoing upgrades.

## **SUMMARY**

This was a transition year for on-ice activities. As reduced usage by Willmar Youth Hockey has occurred, (participant numbers are very low at this time) different uses of the ice time are being tried. Our partnership with Willmar Community Education and Recreation and Willmar Public Schools has provided access to a network of "newcomer" groups that are experiencing winter activities for the first time. Our goal is to continue providing opportunities for these groups so that assimilation into the fun world of skating and curling occurs for them.

Curling has expanded again to include Junior Curling, (ages 11-18) and Open Curling on Saturday nights. League participation has increased to 85 members. Currently, over 500 high school students have been instructed in curling the past two years, through the Physical Education department at the Senior High School, and instruction provided by the Willmar Community Education and Recreation, Willmar Curling Club partnership.



The facility continues to host a variety of trade shows and events that serve to draw visitors to the community and translate into an excellent economic benefit for the City far beyond funds raised through rentals. The un-documented amount of economic benefit goes beyond hotel/motel, restaurants, service stations, retail and fast food establishments.

<b>REVENUE SERVICE CHARGES</b>	<b>2005 AMOUNT</b>	<b>2006 AMOUNT</b>
Miscellaneous	\$1,094.66	\$698.30
Admissions	\$ .00	\$ .00
Tournament Fees (Commissions)	\$2,560.80	\$2,047.40
Skating Programs	\$940.00	\$4,544.00
Ice Arena Rent	\$138,102.79	\$143,011.80
Dry Floor Events	\$60,991.98	\$56,860.21
Skate Rentals/ Skate Sharpening	\$1,150.24	\$1,127.99
Open Skating Public Fees	\$2,170.41	\$2,406.65
Advertising Sales	\$5,043.72	\$7,300.00
Vending Machine	\$13,324.80	\$12,315.57
Concessions	\$47,890.09	\$45,209.53
Hockey Games	\$15,362.00	\$16,344.00
Accessories Sales	\$60.09	\$93.46
<b>TOTAL SERVICE CHARGES</b>	<b>\$288,691.58</b>	<b>\$291,958.91</b>