

TOWN OF RAMAPO
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Parks & Recreation
Michelle Antosca, Director Parks & Recreation

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In response to Robert I. Rhode's letter to the editor on January 15, 2008 "Pledges for affordable housing ring hollow" I would like to clarify the numerous mistakes that were printed with no back-up. We can all throw "hollow" numbers out and hope that people don't check the facts; however, I thought I should share the reality-

As the Director of the Parks & Recreation Department, I take absolute offense to the fact that someone that has never spoken to me regarding our Department, a department that has been working extremely hard to manage the 25 parks and facilities that we are lucky to have in the Town of Ramapo. I consider myself lucky not only to live in this town, but to help in the management of one of the largest Parks & Recreation Departments in the state of New York.

Let's move onto the facts: Rustic Brook had numerous parties interested in purchasing it, however the Town was able to acquire it and since then it has never had less than 200 members. In 2007 we had 156 new memberships and 255 renewal memberships. Aside from a total of 411 memberships, there were 10 full summer camp programs and numerous tennis clinics and programs generating over \$250,000 in revenue for 2007.

Moving onto the Cultural Arts Center in Spring Valley where we have been booked every weekend in 2007 and we are booked in advance for every weekend in 2008. This facility is also used by a local dance group for a safe place to practice in the village 3 times a week as well as East Ramapo Central School District. It is also the home of the Spring Valley NAACP, Ramapo Haitian Task Force and soon to be the home of the Ramapo Youth Boxing and Job Training Programs.

Now onto the biggest misprint in the article, the St. Lawrence Center in Hillburn. This center is far from under utilized; if we could find more space we could use it without question. Although part of the number was correct, yes we have 374 renewals from when we opened in November 2006, however we had 758 memberships in 2007 for a total of 1,132 memberships and a total of 2,380 members. This along with the dome being booked solid December-April 2008, the field booked seven days a week from March-November, successful youth classes, fitness classes, tennis classes, senior driving classes, family nights, local groups renting gym space, birthday parties, open gym nights for teens and adults, basketball and volleyball tournaments for hundreds of youth and teens, this center brought in approximately \$475,000 in 2007 and looks to generate in excess of \$600,000 in 2008.

As for the new facility on route 202 that opened last week free for senior citizens offering fitness classes, line dancing (which I visited today and saw 30 seniors attending the free program), arts & crafts, games, and general socialization for our senior community we are also using that facility almost every day of the week for a good cause. Over 100 Ramapo senior citizens enjoyed ringing in the New Year at the center, organized by the seniors for the seniors who already want to register for next year. It is home to the seniors during the week, drop-in days as well as senior group meetings, and at night 3 nights a week and some Saturdays and Sundays it is used for meeting space for local youth and civic groups. We get calls daily for future rentals for birthday parties and family events as it is the only local facility available for these functions at a reasonable cost for residents.

I could go also into another positive Town purchase which you strategically avoided, Camp Scuffy. This 25 acre camp was another piece of property that could have gone been sold to other buyers, but again it was purchased by the Town. Now we have a facility that has been filled each summer since we opened with 550 campers. We had to move the CIT program to the St. Lawrence Center to allow for more campers and now generate over \$750,000 in revenue for the 6-week program. Camp Scuffy has been an extremely successful program allowing residents the option of a “private-like” camp that is available at a fraction of the cost and only available to Ramapo residents.

In Summary, when you are looking for people to believe that you are speaking the truth it is best to actually speak the truth. The writer of the letter has no indirect or direct contact with this department nor has he ever spoken to me, therefore the facts reported are completely unsubstantiated. The staff team of this department works extremely hard to maintain high standards, considering the amount of property managed by this Town I can only commend all the employees and thank them for all they do. It is clear that we are lucky to have the facilities that we have in Ramapo and it shows by the amount of use our parks and facilities receive every day.

Sincerely,

Michelle Antosca
Director of Parks & Recreation
Town of Ramapo