

Raleigh Park and Recreation: Adult Leisure Programs

Issue Area: Recreational Opportunities

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Summary:

The Adult Leisure Programs, run by the Raleigh parks system, offers some of the most expansive program catalogs for seniors on the East Coast, and that is only half of what they do. While the central program offers classes relating to health awareness and support, as well as leisure trips and recreational programs, the other half of the program is a network of senior clubs that have been dubbed “The Golden Years Clubs.” These clubs offer their own programs, trips, and classes that are individualized to each club. The adult leisure programs were started in the mid 60’s through a small number of senior clubs that offered recreational programs. Over the years, a number of older adult clubs have grown and a blueprint of leisure programs has been created and expanded.

Steve White, the co-director for the adult leisure programs, describes the programs offered by the Raleigh Department of Parks and Recreation as an organization that serves the senior community through two branches. One branch is the network of senior clubs or “Golden Years” clubs, and the other branch is the series of programs offered year-round by the Department of Parks and Recreation. The Golden Years Clubs are composed of persons “55 and better” who are members at one or more of the forty-five different older adult clubs. The clubs are usually co-sponsored by other organizations such as older adult living communities and churches. Members choose which club they want to join, and then pay a small initiation fee followed by a very low (as low as \$1) monthly fee. Each branch serves around 2,000 older adults per year. Because each club’s members work together to choose what programs or trips they like best and desire, each club offers a unique set of activities. Some of the programs that the golden years clubs run are day trips, cards and games, luncheons, speakers, special events, and crafts. For activities like trips or speakers that require more extensive planning, the “central” leisure program serves as the major source to help coordinate and find resources that the club members themselves cannot fund or coordinate.

The other branch of the Adult Leisure Programs, the central year-long adult leisure program, has been as successful as the golden years clubs’ programs. The central program is funded by small class fees and funding from the Raleigh Department of Parks and Recreation. The adult leisure program offers its own continuous variety of classes,

trips, and programs. Unlike the individual clubs, an older adult does not need to be a member in order to participate in any of the activities. Most of the activities have a small participation fee. However, the Raleigh Department of Parks and Recreation provides opportunities to obtain financial assistance to pay for program fees through scholarship programs. The leisure programs also offers clubs at no cost that are subsidized by the Department of Parks and Recreation. The adult leisure program is an impressive model because of the extensive and diverse amount of programs offered. The leisure program catalog (not including programs offered through the senior clubs) offers over 20 different one-day and overnight trips within North Carolina and outside of the U.S. They offer approximately sixteen exercise and fitness classes, five dance classes, and over 15 miscellaneous programs ranging from scrap booking to osteoporosis support groups as well as special events featuring plays and concerts. The Department of Parks and Recreation is very aware and concerned about the wellness of their older adult population. Most of their health-related classes are offered free of charge in order to provide all older adults in the Raleigh area with a free means to maintain, improve, and learn about their health.

The Adult Leisure Programs in Raleigh, NC is one of the best recreational older adult programs offered by a city department on the East Coast. Because of their dual-branch system, they are able to offer individualized, socially oriented activities through their golden years clubs, and broad and extensive programs open to everyone at affordable fees through their year-round “central” adult leisure program.

Related Resources:

Adult Leisure Programs – Summer 2004.

<http://www.raleigh-nc.org/parks&rec/programs/adult_program.pdf>.

Trip Brochure – Summer 2004.

<http://www.raleigh-nc.org/parks&rec/programs/2004_Trip_Brochure.pdf>.

Recreational Programs.

<<http://www.raleigh-nc.org/parks&rec/programs.asp>>.

Raleigh Parks and Recreation.

<<http://www.raleigh-nc.org/parks&rec/index.asp>>.