West Suburban Special Recreation Association

Enriching lives through recreation. Healthy Outlets for Recreation and Fun...
Introductions

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WSSRA Served Record Breaking Numbers of Children & Adults in 2019

WHY?
Why WSSRA camps & programs?

- Kids & Adults need something to do in the summer and year round
- Parents need to work
- Social workers sign them up
- WSSRA programs/camps are a great time

- WSSRA camps & programs helps participants retain their skills
- Parents trust WSSRA with their family member
- Our participants are accepted and are happy when they come home
What are SRA’s?(Special Recreation Associations)

- SRA’s are unique to Illinois
- SRA’s are funded by the local property taxes of the communities who join the SRA
- Local park districts have the responsibility of serving all persons including those with disabilities
- So, they created this joint agreement as a way to do it successfully and economically
What is a Joint Agreement?

- Any two or more park districts can create this joint agreement and are then able to levy the SRA tax.
- Without the joint agreement there is no access to the SRA; Handicapped tax.
- The first SRA was formed in 1970. Since then, there are 31 SRA's formed covering over 207 communities in various geographic regions throughout the state of Illinois.
Special Recreation Association’s

• Provide year-round recreation opportunities for children through adults with disabilities

• There are 31 SRA’s currently serving 207 different communities in Northern Illinois

• Inclusion support is also provided by SRA’s for any local participating park districts. Contact your local SRA for more information

• At the conclusion of the presentation, we will send a listing of the SRA’s, contacts and the communities they serve
What if my community is not a part of an SRA?

- While the SRA's service communities throughout the state, it is the community's choice to be a part of this cooperative agreement.
- If your community is not part of an SRA, it is time for you to become your family members advocate & educate.
- Happy to be a contact and support.
SRA Staff Credentials

- Most full-time Recreation staff have Undergraduate and Masters degrees in Therapeutic Recreation or Recreation Therapy or a related field.

- Most support staff are either a high school or college student that receives ongoing training on disability and behavior management to help promote the success of our participants.
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<th>Why WSSRA/SRA’s camps/programs?</th>
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<td>• Participants learn new skills</td>
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<td>• Participants come home exhausted and everyone sleeps well!</td>
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<td>• Participant looks forward to returning</td>
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<td>• Participants meet new friends</td>
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<td>• Staff are welcoming and give positive reports about the participants engagement in the programs</td>
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<td>• “My family member fits in here!”</td>
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<td>• Life is good during program season!</td>
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Why WSSRA/SRA camps/program?

- Staff help problem-solved all of the obstacles
- “My child loses weight and gets in shape.”
- WSSRA provides transportation so participants can get there........
Challenges presented by COVID-19

- Changes in routine
- Loss of services and supports
- Uncertainty of when programs will open up
- Plans change from day to day and hour by hour
- Social Isolation
There's always a Silver Lining...

- WSSRA created over 100 "Sunshine Breaks" that are YOUTUBE video's still available at wssra.net
- Participants & Families learned to navigate the virtual world
- Forced a new level of creativity, virtual dances, Bowling Bingo, virtual parades, reptile shows and virtual campfire singalongs with no mosquitoes to shorten the events pleasure...
- Ultimately, we met participants where they were at safely and prevented social isolation!
What are the benefits from participation?
"WSSRA programs make me happy or challenge me!"
"Help me feel like I belong, and I can make a friend...."
"Improve my health, both mental & physical"
It’s not in the WHAT...

It’s in the HOW
WSSRA does extensive training with staff to prepare them to meet the participants where they are at.
WSSRA recognizes there will be challenges...
How does WSSRA manage challenges?

WSSRA staff works with each participant to help turn the challenge into an opportunity of growth!
Problems are Opportunities in Disguise

"Lasting success is laced with problem-solving which requires creativity and innovation."
We Choose Success!

We know SUCCESS looks different for every participant!
WSSRA staff work as a team to learn to Walk in their shoes, again, and again and again.
Participants recognize the value of fun & friendship!
Thank you for your time and attention!

For more information go to:
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