

Ankeny Parks & Recreation Gym Reservation Program

As Ankeny continues to grow to over 40,000 people, the need for gym space is oftentimes overwhelming for our Department.

Today it is not uncommon for sports teams to be practicing year around. Volleyball, basketball, softball, baseball and soccer teams are in need of gym time and gym space year-round. Currently, Ankeny Parks and Recreation has 300 youth and adult sports teams that need gym space for practices, clinics and/or games. More than 20,000 participants will take part in programs offered by Ankeny Parks and Recreation. In addition, nearly 200 community traveling competitive, and/or AAU teams will schedule gym times on a weekly basis throughout the school year.

To facilitate this scheduling process, the Ankeny Park & Recreation Department coordinates and implements the collaborative City-School Gym Reservation Program.

Began in 1975 and modified many times since due to growth, the Parks & Recreation Department schedules gymnasium times for all non-school related activity needs. As an exchange for Parks & Recreation scheduling community teams in 11 different Ankeny Community School District gyms; the Departments gets free use of gym space for our recreation programs and activities.

Parks & Recreation works with the School District's Community Education Department in calendar coordination and year-round gym scheduling. During the summer months, Community Education handles the gym reservation process, but once the school year begins, Ankeny Parks and Recreation takes over the program.

The program works in the following way:

- Two "Gym Lotteries" are offered during the school year. All interested parties have the opportunity to enter the "lottery" system to schedule gym times. Lottery dates and times are posted in our Fall/Winter Program Guide.
- Lottery 1 runs from October – Thanksgiving Break, with Lottery 2 beginning the end of November – April. Participants can enter the lottery with a \$50 deposit check that eventually goes toward their rental fees. Participant's names are drawn randomly for the lottery selection order and entries can schedule 1 one hour practice per week as we make our way through the lottery. The order is then reversed from the bottom up to the top to schedule an additional practice per week.
- The School District has first priority when it comes to scheduling of the facilities for their school needs. Ankeny Parks and Recreation has next priority for our programs and activities. Once our two entities are scheduled, remaining open slots are made available to public renters. Ankeny Parks and Recreation works very closely with Community Education as all reservations through us must be

approved by Community Education. To better facilitate the process, Community Education and Parks & Recreation purchased a scheduling system which allows instant access to school calendars and schedules on-line.

- Parks & Recreation charges public renters a fee to reserve gym space. Current fees for gym reservations are \$13 and \$15/hour respectively. Teams that are cross-courted are charged \$13 and teams that have the entire gym are charged \$15. Ankeny Parks and Recreation provides a staff member (gym supervisor) to unlock the facility, sweep the floors, turn on/off the lights, adjust hoops, answer questions and provide first-aid if needed. The key benefit for Parks and Recreation, as a result of this collaborative program, is the free use of school gymnasiums for our program needs.

Gymnasiums available vary in size and condition. An additional elementary will be open for the 2008-2009 school year and will be pressed into service immediately due to Parks & Recreation as well as community gym space demand. We are averaging a 4-8% increase in gym reservations per year.

Communication between Ankeny Parks and Recreation and Community Education is paramount to the success of the program. Ankeny Parks & Recreation utilizes one of its Recreation Coordinators to handle the daily administrative tasks associated with this program. Daily communication occurs with Community Education staff to insure this program runs smoothly.

Despite the program's overall effectiveness, a number of challenges exist. A sample of these challenges is as follows:

- The internet calendar is not always up-to-date.
- Parks and Recreation programs and public usage can get bumped by school functions at any given time.
- These are Ankeny Community School's facilities, but we are in charge of the up-keep during the gym reservation season and must deal with problems when they arise.

In conclusion, a collaborative partnership between Parks & Recreation and the School District on the utilization of school gymnasiums is ideal for those communities without their own recreation facility. The program also accentuates the positive cooperation that can happen when two public entities work together for a common cause. In Ankeny, the demand for gym space is only going to increase as we continue to grow. Long-term, the need for our own recreation center is essential, however until that day comes, the City-School Gym Reservation Program is critical in serving both the needs of our Department and the overall community.

For questions on the implementation of this program, please contact Recreation Coordinator Ryan Penning at 963-3574 or rpenning@ci.ankeny.ia.us.