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I. Executive Summary/Overview

Recreation plays an important role in developing skills, promoting good health, and facilitating social interactions. Per the National Recreation and Park Association's (NRPA) 2015 Field Report (A Parks and Recreation National Database Analysis), "The beginning of 2015 sees parks and recreation agencies performing more roles in serving their communities than ever before. They provide leadership as public health advocates, programming as recreational experts, care and maintenance as public facilities stewards, and conservation and education as naturalists and managers of public lands. In all of these roles, agencies also uphold standards of social equity and equal access to public resources. Park and recreation professionals – as well as the citizen advocates who support them – are critical to the integrity and accessibility of our nation's system of public lands, resources and opportunities for healthy living. And the data could not be clearer: Agencies need support now more than ever."

The City of Sparks Parks and Recreation Department provides more than 100 programs for all ages and abilities – sports leagues, camps, competitions, aquatics, art classes, dance, leisure and learning programs, senior outings, special events, youth watch and more. The recreation staff also manages three community centers, two outdoor swimming venues including the Sparks Marina Park, and two sports complexes.

In FY15 there were 34,899 enrollments in recreation programs and a total of 327,562 participant visits. Approximately 20 percent of the annual enrollments are from residents living in communities other than Sparks.

Youth Watch programs, offered year-round, represent a significant portion of the services provided. These are programs offered to children while they are out of school and they include before and after school, summer camp, school breaks, etc.

Ideally, the scope of services we provide is dependent upon the needs of area residents. As the economy continues to improve, participations have increased in our fee based programs. In turn, we have seen a decrease in participations in the free and low cost programs such as the Nell J. Redfield Neighborhood Free Playground Program. However, for certain members of our community there is still a need for these programs. As such, this funding proposal includes the following for your consideration for 2016:

- A. Continue **The Nell J. Redfield Neighborhood Free Playground Program** (under the Youth Watch umbrella) for at-risk youth in 1st through 6th grade.
Amount: **\$14,403.00**

- B. Continue the **Leisure Without Limits** programs for people with disabilities.
Amount: **\$12,296.00**

- C. Partner with UNR Department of Psychology for Behavior Analysis Technicians.
Amount: **\$18,000.00**

\$44,699.00 Total Request

II. Program Description/Statement of Need

Youth Watch Programs – Overview

Making programs and services available to people of all ages and abilities is one of our guiding principles. The City of Sparks provides affordable/accessible youth watch services for families, offering quality programming in a safe environment for pre-school age through 6th grade. Programs include Kid Konnection before/after school (17 sites), break programs, summer programs, holiday breaks, Small Wonders Learning Centers for pre-school age (2 sites) and a The Nell J. Redfield Free Playground Program.

All of the Youth Watch programs engage children in age appropriate recreational activities with an emphasis on socialization and peer interaction. Participants also benefit from educational opportunities presented by community groups and staff. The programs are primarily staffed by college students and high school students.

A subsidy service agreement with the Children's Cabinet is implemented annually to assist low income households with Youth Watch user fees (as applicable). The funds are issued through the Children's Cabinet to low-income citizens based on a scale and program policies implemented by the State of Nevada Welfare Division. If this funding source is not available for some reason, other funding opportunities are available through our Youth Scholarship Program.

A. The Nell J. Redfield Neighborhood Free Playground Program

This successful program provided for at-risk youth attending 1st through 6th grade.

Since 2009, the program has been held at the Larry D. Johnson (LDJ) Community Center located at 12 00 12th St. in Sparks. This facility is in a prime location within Ardmore Park and adjacent to the Sparks Library. LDJ is in Sparks' most ethnically diverse area and includes all or portions of many of the city's oldest neighborhoods. Approximately 57% of households in the surrounding area are low to moderately low income with limited services available. This is partly attributable to a population that includes more renters, seniors, and single wage-earner households.

From 2010 - 2015, the program was conducted Monday through Friday, 8:30 a.m. – 4:30 p.m. during the summer. To assure that local neighborhood youth were served, a one mile radius was enforced. Only children residing within one mile of Ardmore Park were permitted to attend. The most recent session, summer of 2015, had 515 participant visits. The 2016 request no longer includes staffing costs required to open the facility outside of the regular operating hours. We have re-absorbed those costs into the operating budget for the upcoming year.

Funding in 2016 would allow the program to continue to include the following components:

- Daily
 - Organized active and passive games on site

- Maintain a staff to participant ratio of 1:12
- The USDA Summer Food Service Program (SFSP) will provide free nutritious lunches daily at Ardmore Park
- Weekly
 - Themed arts and crafts activities on site through collaborative efforts with VSA arts of Nevada
 - Swimming
 - Field trips to local fun spots such as the skating rink, movies, arcade, library, fire department etc.

FREE PLAYGROUND PROGRAM BUDGET – based on 40 children per day, 5 days/wk, 7 weeks

	Salaries/Benefits	Services/Supplies	Total Expenses
Recreational staff*	\$11,923.00		\$10,885.00
Rec Program Supplies		\$2,480.00	\$ 2,480.00
Total:	\$11,923.00	\$2,480.00	\$14,403.00

***Note:** 4 full time, seasonal staff for the program.

B. Leisure Without Limits Program

The City of Sparks Parks and Recreation Department continues to take a lead role in creating awareness and providing recreational programming for people with disabilities in the Truckee Meadows. Through the development of the Leisure Without Limits program in 1997, people with various disabilities have the opportunity to take part in recreational activities in a safe and supportive environment opening up a world of possibilities.

Under the umbrella of Leisure Without Limits, participants who are not ready for full inclusion in regular programming have access to art workshops, bowling, dances, special outings and events. Benefits of these activities include social activity, acceptance, independence, physical activity, and self confidence; all of which encourage a healthy lifestyle.

Through the creation of the Leisure Without Limits program, we identified a need for recreation services for people with disabilities. The success of this programming has been due in part to continuing collaborative partnerships with organizations such as VSA arts of Nevada, the City of Reno and Special Olympics of Nevada. We continue to work to maintain quality services through community partnerships. Departmental cutbacks as a result of the challenging economic conditions forced us to eliminate the Leisure Without Limits program effective January 1, 2009. Since then, participants and their families have expressed their gratitude about the program continuing through grant funding since 2009. Thanks to your foundation, the program was funded through 2015.

There are various components to the **Leisure Without Limits Program**. As the title implies, there should not be limits or barriers to recreation regardless of age and/or ability. The majority of programming involves access to recreational, social activities and events in the community. What makes this program different is that the participant interacts with their own population versus full inclusion in regular

programming. Although inclusion is a concept worth achieving...it is not for everyone. While providing a safe atmosphere, Leisure Without Limits brings the participant to public facilities rather than bringing the activity to the participant in a group home or private facility/setting. The various components of the program include:

VSA arts Program – Art workshops offered once a week throughout the year for \$5 per month.

- VSA initially came to the City of Sparks for assistance with a program location and we have collaborated with them ever since. The two agencies equally share the cost of the instructor and the City provides a facility free of charge.
- The program utilizes many high school student volunteers. It provides students the valuable experience of working with individuals with disabilities.
- Art is an important venue for communication, creative expression, a sense of accomplishment and provides an immeasurable therapeutic outlet.

Bowling – In 2008 the City of Sparks staff enthusiastically took over this program from staff at the Sierra Regional Center, which was in the process of being discontinued.

- Simply stated, this program provides a social atmosphere for people with disabilities.
- This program prepares athletes for the annual Special Olympics Bowling Tournament scheduled in November. Two of our staff are official coaches and provide assistance, guidance and encouragement to bowlers. In 2015 53 bowlers participated in the Special Olympics tournament at the National Bowling Stadium.
- Outside the tournament preparation, there remains a strong interest of approximately 30+ bowlers that continue to bowl at a recreational level once a week for a minimal fee.

Mark Wellman's Adventure Day Event – Annual event at the Sparks Marina Park.

- This is one of the few if not the only event in the area that allows people with disabilities the opportunity to try outdoor adapted sports activities including sailing, kayaking, rock climbing, bicycling with hand cycles and tandem cycles for people with visual impairments.
- The event is made possible by continuing partnerships with Paralympian/Adventure Athlete/Motivational Speaker, Mark Wellman and his company No Limits; The Northern Nevada Center for Independent Living; The City of Reno; and Sierra Nevada Community Sailing.
- This action packed day is offered free of charge and provides an opportunity to grow self confidence and the ability to overcome fears related to outdoor sports and/or newly acquired disabilities.

Dance events – Seasonally themed events with the opportunity to dress up.

- These are popular events that encourage up to 200 participants for a minimal fee.
- Dances provide socialization, physical activity, and freedom of expression.
- Annually, we conduct a Cinco de Mayo Dance, Halloween Dance and Christmas Dance. The Christmas Dance is the most popular with approximately 200 in attendance.

LEISURE WITHOUT LIMITS PROGRAM BUDGET FOR ONE YEAR

Program/component	Services/Supplies	Total
VSA Arts	\$1,200	\$1,200
Bowling	\$1,000	\$1,600
Mark Wellman	\$4,700	\$5,096
Dance events	\$4,200	\$4,400
Totals	\$11,000	\$12,296

Note: A minimal participant fee is charged for some programs to help offset overhead expenses for the otherwise non-revenue generating programs.

The **VSA arts program** utilizes prominent local artists who have the additional talent needed to work with people with disabilities. VSA matches the funding we pay for the artist. Fortunately, we have been able to provide a quality program with integrity due to artist instructor, Tia Flores since 2002.

The amount requested for **Special Olympics Bowling** reflects the purchase of bowling shirts or uniforms we would provide to athletes for the tournament. The tournament is the highlight of the season for the athletes. They compete at the National Bowling Stadium with other teams from around the region including Carson City, South Lake Tahoe, Fernley and Fallon. The bowling shirts differentiate each team as the athletes wear them with pride.

The bowling component, Mark Wellman Adventure Day and the themed dances are all staffed by part-time employees with guidance from full-time staff. All part-time employees involved with these programs have a willingness to support the participants while providing a quality recreational experience. These employees' average pay rate is \$11.00 per hour. Economic improvements and budgetary adjustments have allowed us to re-absorb these costs so they are not included in the request for funding in 2016.

As reflected in the chart above, \$11,000 is budgeted for Services and Supplies. These expenses include decorations, food and beverage for the dances; a DJ for dance entertainment; professional services for Adventure Day; and arts and craft supplies.

C. UNR Behavioral Services

New in 2015, we partnered with the University of Nevada, Reno to provide behavior services in the Parks and Recreation Youth Watch programs. The success of this collaboration has led to an increased demand for these services in 2016.

The Kid Konnection before and after school program services 17 elementary schools throughout Sparks. The programs run every school day from 7 a.m. until school starts and from the time school is dismissed until 6 p.m. Kid Konnection averages 750 participations per day. The program is staffed by college and high school students.

Staff deals with challenging and difficult behaviors from the children on a daily basis. The Behavior Specialists from UNR teach staff behavioral compliance techniques

and procedures to apply when working with children. They provide hands on demonstrations and training for the staff during program hours. These professionals add quality, integrity and consistency to the programs. They are a very valuable resource for the program staff.

The UNR staff also implements positive behavior reinforcement techniques into the programs to support the children and recognize and reward appropriate behavior. The Specialists are also extremely knowledgeable and skilled at working with children that have special needs such as autism, ADD or ADHD.

The collaboration between UNR and Parks and Recreation would provide two Board Certified Behavior Technicians to support the Parks and Recreation Kid Konnection staff for approximately 15 hours per week in 2016. Supervised by Dr. Patrick Ghezzi, PhD, BCBA-D, LBA (NV), these specialists contribute to the overall program quality and provide an expertise that benefits all of children, families and staff at each school site.

Funding in 2016 would allow the partnership to continue and include the following components:

- Staff training on the implementation of programs, behavioral analysis principles, and data collection procedures.
- Assessment and intervention for aberrant behaviors (e.g., aggression, non-compliance, disruption and tantrums), as-needed basis.
- Assessment and intervention for behavioral deficits (e.g., communication skills, social skills and vocational skills) of students.
- Report writing and program evaluations, as needed.

UNR BEHAVIOR SERVICES CONTRACT FOR 1 YEAR

Program/component	Salaries/benefits
Technician Wages	\$11,400.00
Professional Oversight	\$5,460.00
Administrative Costs	\$1,140.00
Totals	\$18,000.00

III. Organization Information

City of Sparks Parks & Recreation

Vision: *Enhanced quality of life for all citizens of Sparks through the benefits of a comprehensive park, recreation and cultural program.*

Mission: *To provide for the health, inspiration and recreation opportunities of the people of Sparks and to ensure the dedication and preservation of natural resources for high quality leisure experiences for generations to come.*

Recreation and parks are essential to the quality of life for any community. In 2015, the City of Sparks Parks and Recreation Department provided services for more than 327,562 participant visits in recreational programs, maintained 50 park sites covering 583 acres of land, and promoted a calendar of special events enjoyed by hundreds of thousands of residents and visitors.

We offer more than just parks and playgrounds; our programs impact lives every day – children, families, seniors and people with disabilities:

- Ensuring children aren't home alone by providing before and after-school care
- Encouraging people with disabilities to engage in leisure and recreation activities in a safe and supportive environment
- Giving boys and girls the tools they need to enjoy sports – good sportsmanship, teamwork, skill development and helping to combat the growing trend of youth obesity through exercise
- Offering places for people to experience nature, engage in physical activity and relax

These services – available to all citizens living in the Truckee Meadows and surrounding communities – have far-reaching benefits, promoting healthy lifestyles for area residents and providing safe places for children to play and grow.

To assist less advantaged children and teens with access to parks and recreation programs, the City of Sparks established a Youth Scholarship Fund in 2002.

V. Appendix

Statement regarding qualified tax exempt status:

The City of Sparks is a unit of local government and pursuant to Publication 78, *Cumulative List of Organizations described in Section 170(c) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986*, is a list of organizations eligible to receive tax-deductible charitable contributions. Contributions to an organization described in section 170(c)(1) for exclusively public purposes will be allowed regardless of whether the organization has received a letter confirming its status. Section 170(c)(1) describes states, possessions of the United States, political subdivisions of the foregoing, the United States, and the District of Columbia.

Information from the National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA)

NRPA's Three Pillars – Conservation, Health and Wellness, and Social Equity – emphasize the range of roles park (and recreation) leaders fulfill in strengthening communities.

Per NRPA's 2015 Field Report (A Parks and Recreation National Database Analysis), "The beginning of 2015 sees parks and recreation agencies performing more roles in serving their communities than ever before. They provide leadership as public health advocates, programming as recreational experts, care and maintenance as public facilities stewards, and conservation and education as naturalists and managers of public lands. In all of these roles, agencies also uphold standards of social equity and equal access to public resources. Park and recreation professionals – as well as the citizen advocates who support them – are critical to the integrity and accessibility of our nation's system of public lands, resources and opportunities for healthy living. And the data could not be clearer: Agencies need support now more than ever."

The Larry D. Johnson Community Center is in Sparks' most ethnically diverse area and includes all or portions of many of the city's oldest neighborhoods. In general:

- § This area's household incomes are substantially lower than for Sparks as a whole or Washoe County. This is partly attributable to a population that includes more renters, seniors, and single wage-earner households.
- § The housing stock is considerably older than in other areas of Sparks, with a substantial number of units in need of rehabilitation or renovation. The area also includes a number of aging trailer parks. Apartment rents are lower, with higher vacancy rates. Housing values are also lower than in other parts of Sparks.
- § The commercial building stock in these neighborhoods is among the oldest in the region. Some commercial areas have declined substantially and are blighted by substandard and obsolete structures.