

**2011
Human Services Department
Annual Report**

The Human Services Department is staffed by a full time Human Services Director and a Part Time Youth Bureau Director. The department was created in February 2002 to coordinate and address quality of life and youth issues affecting the city of Cohoes.

Human Services Department Core Objectives

- To conduct an ongoing needs assessment within the community.
- To provide further recreation and enrichment programs to foster positive growth amongst our youth.
- To communicate with organizations, agencies, schools, etc. that work with youth to expand upon services offered within the city.
- To provide referrals or information to youth, parents or families in need of services.
- To further expand programs for the youth and elderly populations.
- To build upon the Character Education initiatives offered in our schools.
- To foster a stronger sense of community spirit amongst city residents.

The above objectives are met through the collaboration of many different programs and organizations. The Human Services Department is often involved in the planning, coordination, and supporting of many activities and programs. Several of these programs were sponsored directly by the Human Services Department and others made possible through the cooperation and dedication of other agencies and/or organizations.

The following is a detailed analysis of the programs and contributions that the department has made to the youth of Cohoes and its residents over the past year.

Recreation Opportunities Available through the Human Services Department and Youth Bureau

Municipal Swimming Pool at Lansing Park

11,062 Cohoes residents
642 Out of town folks
11, 704 TOTAL

The 2011 season was a very hot summer. We had a higher number in pool patrons from last year about a 1,000 more. We dealt with some issues early in the season with patrons who did not want to pay. Police were involved and the issues diminished as the season went on. The attendance was high this year for the Learn-to-Swim program. Residents really enjoy being able to send their children to swimming lessons for free. In addition, we continued with our adult swim nights, which are on Thursday. We also started an aerobics class which was extremely successful. The class ran the length of the season every Tuesday & Thursday nights from 6-7. We continued our Fun Fridays, that allowed the staff to participate in many relays, competitions, water sports etc. Each Friday had a theme and the staff decorated and gave giveaways depending on that theme. It was really well received.

Updates to the pool; board broke again and was covered under warranty. Pump had been repaired and replaced, ladders were stolen and a police report was completed and sent to insurance. Buildings are still in need of major repair for opening in 2012, bathrooms, fresh paint etc.

2011 Summer Sports Academy

The Sports Academy just completed its 28th Season! Attendance of course was booming with an average of 50-75 kids per day attending the camp. Our overall attendance for the summer season was 403 Cohoes youths. All of the participants seemed to enjoy themselves as they learned a new sport each week. The sports covered this year included basketball, soccer, lacrosse, tennis, football and baseball,. 15-Love participated in our tennis program this year; Valley Cats came to our baseball segment as well as the ice cream truck as a promo from Capital Communications. The High School football coaches partook in the football segment which grew tremendously this year. We did deal with many conflicts with space due to the construction at the school district, but overall it was a very successful season. We also had a special presentation each week from local Karate owner. It was a great opportunity for the kids to learn more about karate and in our local town.

Summer Parks Program

The summer parks program was altered this year to fit the needs and demands from our youth. Participation was low the past few years and this year we switched the parks to have park attendants in Lansing Park, VanSchaick and Craner Park. The construction has been completed at VanSchaick. It went very well this year with attendance rising. Lansing Park had over 103 participants, Craner had 115 participants and VanSchaick had 95 participants, with an overall of 313 participants over the course of the summer. Each week our park attendants had to schedule something for the kids to do outside of the normal arts & craft time. We had Fun Fridays every Friday which we had competitions, ice cream etc. Movies in the park was canceled due to weather and has not been able to be rescheduled due to copyrights.

We were rained out, again, this year for Jeter the K-9 and the Fire Safety Week. We did have a good turnout for crafts this year and some other things that we offered include but do not limit to; kickball, wiffle ball, Uno and football.

Beautification Program (Swifties)*

The Beautification program, also know as the Swifties Crew, ran from June 24th to August 28th, school ended late this year. We were able to extend a week for those who were able to work till the 28th. The Swifties were very instrumental in the opening of Lansing Pool, ensuring that the bathrooms and locker-rooms were sparkling as well as making sure the pool was vacuumed and the grounds were cleaned-up. They raked up all of the leaves that had built up along the fence-line over the course of the fall and winter, cut all of the vines out of the fence, and weed-whacked areas that were overgrown.

A list was compiled of all the areas each Council Member had wanted to be addressed for the season. The Swifties crew was able to complete each area as well as maintaining there daily assignments, which include but do not limit to vacuuming the pool, cleaning the bathrooms & locker rooms at the pool as well as litter pick-up!

The program is very successful and is a great opportunity for the youth to have summer employment as well as providing a few extra hands for the Recreation crew. The Switifies group did an excellent job and was commended for their efforts with an end of season party hosted at Lansing's Pool.

This season in particular, we had many extra hands with a work program from Albany County and Rensealer County. We had 6 extra workers from Albany County and 2 extra from Rensealaer. The coordination was a bit complicated, but it worked out very well, funding for these programs are unsecure for summer 2011's work program.

Youth Soccer League

The Cohoes Youth Soccer League is a combined effort with League organizers and the City of Cohoes Human Services Department, the Cohoes Community Center and the Cohoes School District. The soccer program is growing every year and has expanded to a travel program and summer clinics. The league services children from kindergarten through eighth grade with four different divisions, divided by age groups. The four divisions are the clinic, minors, intermediate, and an expansion division for the oldest children. The games are played primarily on the weekends, with a few played on Wednesday evenings. The program services over 450 children every year, and Lansing Park is filled with kids, parents and coaches every weekend throughout the fall. Coaches are parents and volunteers within the community that give of their time to make this program a success.

Over 30 Winter Basketball

League did not take off this season due to availability of the gym.

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Skate Park

The skate park was open with attendants till August of this year, there after we opened the facility as a skate at your own risk facility. We were able to cut cost, increase operation hours and monitor the park through cameras. The skate park was battling issues with staff performance/enforcing rules, limited skate park hours and budget concerns. In the local community, many other skate parks were also opening up their skate parks as a skate at your own risk facility which was having great success. We've had great feed back through the skating community stating that they really enjoy the skate park hours now and flexibility. We were able to provide interim jobs for the skate park staff until they were able to find other jobs. We are extremely pleased with the amount of use that the skate park received this year and are hopeful that within a few years we could expand the park to include more apparatus.

The DEN

Due to budget constraints and the Den's condition, the Den is temporarily closed until further notice. The Den became officially closed in September of 2009. Other opportunities have been assessed for temporary relocation and are still being worked on. We submitted the Central Facility out to bond; the Central Facility would include a new home for our Den.

During 2007 the City received a Community Youth Investment grant in the amount of \$30,000 to create a central facility that would house the Den, concession stand, locker rooms, lifeguard office and restrooms. The project has not been completed.

Possible Lansing's Soccer Complex

We have been dealing with drainage, building and space issues for some time now at the Lansing Park soccer fields, Den and Pool area. We had been approached in the spring of 2010 by Tony Urban with the Army. They are doing a schematic of possible new fields, drainage, concession stand, pavilion etc. at the Lansing Park area. Surveys have been completed at this time, no word on final project.

Special Events and Activities

Annual Easter Egg Hunt

This year's Easter Egg Hunt at George Street Park was held on Saturday, April 16th, 2011. This year's event was a combined effort of the Lansing Street Neighborhood Watch, the City of Cohoes Human Services Department and Youth Bureau, The Office of General Services, and several volunteers from within City Hall and in the community. Over 4,000 eggs are given out along with prizes and a special appearance for the Easter Bunny. Again, "Golden Egg" prizes were awarded to one boy and girl in each age division. It was extremely cold for this year, however the turnout was larger than ever and all had a very good time.

Annual Halloween Parade and Party

This year's Halloween Parade and party were also a huge success! We had the Halloween Parade and Party on Halloween which was a Monday this year. We had a smaller turnout due to the fact that there were other commitments for the kids on Halloween. This year we actually had the youth LEAD the parade and they were so proud. They were the first group in the parade and many parents and spectators were taking picture after picture of their kids carrying the Character Counts Banner. It really was an exciting evening.

This year we again had over one hundred children march and several parents also joined in. This year's party was again held at the Cohoes Community Center and a great time was had by all. Kiwanis again set up several games throughout the gym and had hotdogs and drinks available for the kids. Several volunteers assisted in running the games and showing the children just how to play the game. The Human Services Department purchased the candy for the event and each child walked out with a trick or treat bag full of candy for their efforts in playing the games that night. All of the kids were dressed in their costumes and had a great time!

Pumpkin Festival

Due to pending law suit with the Annual Haunted Hayride and House, we hosted the Pumpkin Festival again this year. The festival was held at the Farmer's Market Square on October 7th. The Cohoes Youth Advisory Committee did an excellent job hosting this event in place of the Haunted House and Hayride. We offered free pumpkins, face painting, apple cider, donuts, pumpkin painting contests, magic show and a hayride. The DPW department also put on a bonfire. The past few years we had worked with the Middle School Family Festival, but this event was canceled due to budget constraints on the school districts half. Not to mention we were unable to hold a movie night due to the issue of the copy writing. The festival was a huge hit this year, even without the Middle School Family Festival.

Annual Cohoes Turkey Trot

The 48th Annual Cohoes Turkey Trot was again held on Thanksgiving morning and was a huge success. Tee-shirts were offered to the first 300 registered participants. The shirts were sponsored by City, Marra's Pharmacy, MacSource, Brookfield, Spiral Designs, Dr. Mittola, Cohoes Police Officers Union and Award's By Walsh. 'Flash' the fastest Thanksgiving turkey was center stage at this year's event. Paradise Tree Service donated a turkey costume and our Youth Advisory member offered his turkey ability. It was a great hit with the children and helps organize the races. The theme for this year's event was "Can you beat 'Flash' the fastest Thanksgiving Turkey?"

Approximately **500** participants pre-registered to receive a tee-shirt and contributed a non-perishable item. We had a total of over **750** participants in this year's Turkey Trot altogether and had over **25** boxes of non-perishable food items to donate to the Albany County Community Partnership (Co-Cap).

We gave out medals to every runner, which eliminated the confusion and chaos with parents at the end of the races. Medals were awarded to every 1st, 2nd and 3rd place winners of each division in the 3.5 mile Run/Walk. The medals had the tee-shirt logo on them and had plats on the back that had their place and division on them. The plats are removable for reuse purposes. Leftover medals can be used for next year's event; the plat would be melted down to cut down on costs.

Again this year we had The Albany Running Exchange do all of our timing for this event, which was a huge help and a big hit. Our concerns from last years issues where rectified and the event ran very smooth. We also were able to provide a goody bag full of coupons, water bottle, shirts and more. Thanks to Running World and the Racelist. Award's-By-Walsh's donated the water bottle with the Cohoes Turkey Trot logo on it.

A hospitality table was provided by McDonald's of Waterford, Dunkin Donuts of Cohoes, Panera Breads of Latham and Price Chopper of Cohoes. The hospitality table included breads, pastries, donuts, bagels and cream cheese, juice, coffee, water and hot chocolate.

A big thanks was given to all of our volunteers, the race really runs on help and support from the community.

Winter Carnival

Winter Carnival took place on January 30th, 2011. Newschannel 13 did a great piece on the festival prior to the event, which proved to be a great turnout. We had horse drawn carriage rides, hockey on the ice, music, face painting, hot chocolate, hot dogs and more. We had just enough snow and ice to make it a success.

Youth Advisory Board

The Youth Advisory Board has enjoyed a successful year in 2011. As an advisory board they are consulted on all City of Cohoes efforts connected with our Human Services Department and Youth Bureau. As a group they have provided valuable insights as to how to best serve the youth of our community. YAB membership includes student representatives from grades 8-12. Adult members represent Cohoes education, recreation, community action, and law enforcement organizations. For the 2011-2012 school year, the YAB officers are students; Kyleigh Roby & Jess Dupuis, Chair, Zach LeMay, Vice-chair, Matt Cater, Secretary.

The Committee hosts over 12 Movie Nights a year, which were cancelled due to copy writing issues. They participate in various events hosted by the City as well as projects that they create on their own. The Committee has taken a new lead and is working on getting projects completed in a timely fashion. Sub-committees were created to work two different projects at a time. The committees include the After-School Program Committee and the Job Shadowing Committee. Each sub-committee is staffed by an adult. The sub-committees meet outside of the regular scheduled Youth Advisory Board and inform the Board of what their status is.

Community Character Committee

The Character Counts Committee has taken a new lead with the school district. They are working on combining both efforts of the PBIS Committee and the Character Counts committee so that efforts are not duplicated on school districts end and cities end. It is in the process and has not had much information posted. They also work to promote the words of the month through different events or programs. We had a presence at Beautification Day this year as well as the Turkey Trot, Memorial Day Parade, creating the Caring Wreath for the Holiday Season, etc. To show our generosity in City Hall, the staff members again adopted a needy family during the holiday season and helped to make their Christmas a little brighter.

Parks and Playgrounds

During 2011, we completed Berkley Park with all new playground equipment and VanSchaick Island construction was completed that allowed us for new playground, tennis courts, and basketball courts with no expense to the city. A park audit was completed in August 2008 and suggestions of each park have been made and reviewed. The dog park has not yet begun which was a project from 2007; however Dogi I-Pods were purchase for each park. This will help owners clean up after their dogs. The Central Facility has come to a halt due to lack of funding.

Final Thoughts

In addition to providing the schedule events and activities hosted by the city, the Human Services & Youth Bureau Department aids other events and programs in the community. Some of these include the Doug Ellet Memorial 5k Run/Walk, Neighborhood Watch meetings & Events, School District Initiatives, United Way campaign, Local Food Pantry, and much more. The Human Services & Recreation Department is able to provide many services, events and programs to our residents at little to no cost, which we will continue to do for year's to come depending on the continued funding.

In-kind support was provided to the following activities:

- Pumpkin Festival at Farmer's Market Square
- Cohoes Turkey Trot
- Winter Carnival
- Easter Egg Hunt
- Halloween Parade & Party

The following community-based organizations have received in-kind, technical and/or financial support from the City of Cohoes in 2010:

- Cohoes Multi-Service Senior Center
- Cohoes Public Library
- Kiwanis Club of Cohoes
- Cohoes Youth Soccer League
- Cohoes Little League Baseball
- Cohoes Girls Softball Program
- Cohoes Intermediate Baseball League
- Cohoes Neighborhood Watch
- Cohoes Basketball Club
- Cohoes Babe Ruth League