

A VIBRANT RECREATION DEPARTMENT

was a dream deferred for the city of Corning

“About ten years ago the city did have a recreation program which was just beginning to be developed,” says Kristina Miller, Corning City Manager. “Then the Great Recession happened and they lost the coordinator.”

Today, through the close collaboration between the city and Paskenta Band of Nomlaki Indians, with infusion of Corning Promise resources, and the input of the people, the Corning Recreation Department is realizing a vision dreamed a decade ago.

*“Through the Promise Neighborhood grant, we are able to create new and additional recreation opportunities within the greater Corning area,” adds Miller. What’s best is that the core of these **opportunities are based upon a community survey of interests in which over 600 residents responded.***

“We’re taking those responses and using them as a focus but we’re not limiting ourselves by any means,” says Miller, who is excited by the breadth and creativity of classes being made available. Every course must have a youth enrichment/literacy component to enhance it, which means that the new Tae Kwon Do classes will also cover the history of the martial art.

Students are now able to learn everything from video game coding, which transfers to the very marketable skill of computer coding, to vocal performance, which can enhance self-esteem. A princess camp will set imaginations on fire and ballet classes will get kids moving. Digital photography classes will open doors of creativity while a Pinterest Project class will help students take projects from the popular website into their real lives. Building vocabulary is an implicit goal of all courses, which weaves in the larger goals of Corning Promise and a child’s success in school.

Of great pride to all involved was the recent offering of free swimming lessons to all second graders in the

Corning area. *“We provided four days of swim lessons with the goal that every kid, if they fell in the pool, would be able to save their life,”* says Miller. Additional lessons were offered to 30 families needing support beyond the initial offerings to meet this goal. **216 second graders participated in the initial offering**, demonstrating a clear desire for the opportunity.

“I would like to see a very robust program for students to get them very healthy and active after school and in the summer months,” adds Miller. Fortunately, she has many partners who agree with her and are lining up to support the efforts. Both Corning school districts offer their facilities for recreational classes after hours. This means that the most frequently requested course offering — baking and cooking classes — will be able to occur.

Another point of pride is the inter-generational bonding that occurs with events such as Family Game Day, complete with crafting, that will be offered to students through the Senior Center. *“It really bridges the generation gap and it really benefits both sides,”* says Miller of the event. *“It’s been really neat to see how all of the partners have come together to say, “This is best for kids, so let’s do it.”*

These opportunities are also good for the community as a whole. The local organizers recognize the value of the social bonds created when people gather around food and entertainment. *“People want to reside in places where it’s fun to live,”* adds Miller. That’s one reason the City of Corning and the Paskenta Band of Nomlaki Indians have partnered for four Food Truck Tuesday nights in the city. Notoriously laborious to organize, the events are exceedingly successful. *“The community loves it,”* says Miller. *“And that’s what we’re here for. To serve the community.”*