

BUILDING COMMUNITY THROUGH BASKETBALL

A City of Corning Recreation Program

The City of Corning Recreation Program promotes wellness by offering activities encouraging physical fitness and healthy lifestyles. One such initiative, the Youth Basketball Program, supports participants' physical health while fostering community connections. Running annually from January to March, this

program invites children in kindergarten through eighth grade to learn basketball fundamentals in a structured yet fun environment. The turnout in 2025 reflects the popularity of the youth basketball program, with approximately 100 children participating; this number is double the participation from last year.



At the heart of the program are the local high school coaches—Nate Borer, the varsity basketball coach, and Les Pitner, the JV coach. They teach young children basketball skills and valuable lessons about sportsmanship while also mentoring high school students and developing their skills in coaching and refereeing.

Both coaches recognize the meaningful impact that the sport of basketball has on children and youth, as well as the community. Nate Borer, the varsity coach, shared, *"It's been incredible to see the growth of this program. The program helps children stay active and improve their physical fitness. But even more than that, we're building connections, helping kids learn how to work together, support each other, and promote positive values around community building."*

Les Pitner shared the values that can be gained from basketball, *"Our recreational basketball program isn't just about teaching the game—it's about building confidence, teamwork, and a love for staying active. Every time a child steps on the court, they're learning life skills that go far beyond basketball. That's what makes this program so important."*

The City of Corning's Recreation Program pays high school students who coach and referee, provided they meet the legal age requirement for employment. This opportunity



gives them valuable job experience, empowers them to give back to their community, and plays a vital role in shaping them as leaders both on and off the court. Kaidan Raker, a high school referee, commented about his experience, *“Being hired for the last two years as a ref it’s been awesome to see the growth. This year the teams were drafted making it a lot more fair and fun for the kids. I also love seeing kids that are passionate about basketball the way I was when I was their age. So I really enjoy explaining the rules and more to the younger generation. I can’t wait to watch the next generation of basketball players keep improving and keeping their love of the game.”*

One of the challenges the program faces each year is the lack of a dedicated space for practices and games. Without a gym of its own, the program relies on the cooperation of the middle school and high school to provide space for practices and games. Recognizing the program’s value to individuals and the community, the Corning Union Elementary School District has allowed the City of Corning to use its space.

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KAIDAN RAKER

“The City of Corning recreation basketball program is a great example of how sports can unite a community,” said Christina Meeds, Recreation Coordinator for the City of Corning. *“It’s not just about teaching kids how to play basketball. It’s about creating connections, providing a place for them to grow, improving their quality of life through fitness, and giving them role models who are passionate about helping them succeed.”*

This program has been a slam dunk for everyone!

