**RECREATION COMMITTEE TOWN REPORT 2014-2015**

The Recreation Committee continues to be at full strength! The members of the committee are Diana Hardina, Doug Martin, Emily Schoelzel, Julie Dubreuil and Norman Beebe. Emily Crehan, Cowell Gym Director, completed her second full year in the position, and continues to provide caring oversight of the Cowell Gym. Emily’s input on both the Cowell and recreation in general continues to be invaluable to the committee.

The primary responsibility of the Recreation Committee is to provide and facilitate recreational opportunities within our community.  This past year, the Cowell Youth Basketball Program for grades K-6 expanded to four nights with coed groups for grades K-1 and 2-3, and separate evenings for boys and girls for grades 4-6. Shelburne Falls Girls Softball had teams for both grades 2-3 and

4-6, and thanks to the effort of Lindsay Warger, offered a free month-long summer softball program for girls aged 7 to 12. West County Soccer for grades K-6 held another successful season in the fall, and hosted a week-long *Challenger Sports™* Soccer Camp in the summer.

During the fall and winter months, we offered the following ongoing activities at the Cowell Gym: a senior walk three mornings a week, adult basketball three nights a week (both competitive and relaxed) and an evening of volleyball. All of these activities were open to the public and well attended. The senior walk was free and the other activities had a $3 per child or $5 per adult session fee. We also continued to sponsor open gym for the community during school vacation weeks and on school snow days. The Cowell has been rented by outside groups for many uses, including indoor soccer, birthday parties, school physical education classes and team practices, and a monthly playgroup for children from birth to age 5 plus siblings and guardians. The playgroup, offered by the Mohawk Trail Regional School System Coordinated Family and Community Engagement, runs from 5 to 7 pm on the first Friday of every month and is free to the public.

Additionally, two events successfully ran for a second time at the Cowell:

* a Halloween dance for adults, which was co-sponsored by The Art Garden, and
* a New Year’s Eve celebration, Early Night, for families with elementary age children.

We hope to offer these events annually.

Over the winter The Center for Self-Reliance Food Pantry moved its West County Emergency Food Pantry operation to the basement of the Cowell Gym. This move allowed the Food Pantry to have a permanent presence in the Shelburne area and to increase the hours of operation. The Food Pantry is open three Wednesdays a month from 12 to 6 pm and serves 250 individuals from 130 households.

As part of our ongoing communications strategy, the Cowell Gym’s Facebook page has increased its membership, and the Cowell Director sends out regular email updates to folks who have asked to receive them. If you like to receive these emails, please email cowellgymnasium@gmail.com .

This past summer, the outdoor courts at the Cowell continued to be used for both basketball and tennis. The latter proved tenuous as a result of the continuing deterioration of the courts’ surface. The committee is exploring possible funding sources to get the courts repaved. This past winter the courts were again successfully flooded for ice skating. The committee wants to again give a special shout out to Frank Field for his tireless efforts to keep the courts flooded, and to the Town Highway Department for keeping the rink cleared of snow.

The Open Space and Recreation Plan, which the committee worked on last year, was approved by the state and won plaudits for its thoroughness. The Recreation Committee took the lead on developing the recreation part of this plan and is using it as a guide for how we’ll proceed as a committee in the years ahead.

The Recreation Committee would like to thank the people of Shelburne, in particular the Select Board and Mark Shippee, Shelburne Highway Superintendent, for their ongoing support.