**RECREATION COMMITTEE TOWN REPORT 2016-2017**

The Recreation Committee has been short one member this past year when Doug Martin chose not to run for reelection. We miss Doug, but the remaining members of the committee, Diana Hardina, Emily Schoelzel, Julie Dubreuil, and Norman Beebe have somehow ☺ managed to carry on without him. Emily Crehan completed her fourth year as Director 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.  Last spring, Shelburne Falls Girls Softball had three (!!!) teams, one for grades 2-3, and two for grades 4-6. West County Soccer for grades K-6 held another successful season in the fall, and hosted a five-day *Challenger Sports™* Soccer Camp in the summer. This past fall and winter, the Cowell Youth Basketball Program for grades K-6 ran on four nights with coed groups for grades K-1 and 2-3, and separate evenings for boys and girls grades 4-6.

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 volleyball on Wednesday evenings. All of these activities are open to the public. 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 on weekends, during school vacation weeks and on school snow days.

This past year, the Shelburne Recreation Committee’s application for a Massachusetts Parkland Acquisitions and Renovations for Communities grant to repave the Cowell Gym’s outdoor courts, which are used for basketball, tennis, and ice skating, was approved. If all goes as planned, we hope to have the project completed in August. The committee wishes to thank Emily Crehan who put together the application, and who continues to spearhead our efforts to implement the project.

The Cowell has been rented by outside groups for many uses, including indoor soccer, birthday parties, school team practices, a memorial service, 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 p.m. on the first Friday of every month and is free to the public.

Additionally, a Halloween dance to support the Buckland-Shelburne sixth grade trip to Nature’s Classroom was held, and the Art Garden plans to sponsor the third annual 12-hour Draw-around this April. Last year’s Draw-around drew ☺ hundreds of people to the Cowell.

The West County Emergency Food Pantry completed its second full year of operation in the basement of the Cowell Gym. This permanent presence allows the Food Pantry to be open three Wednesdays a month from 12 to 6 pm and to serve nearly four hundred individuals in the Shelburne area. In October, the clothes closet, run by Trinity Church and located in the Cowell Gym basement adjacent to the Food Pantry, completed its first full year of operation. It is open the same hours as the Food Pantry and generally sees 30 to 40 people each day it is open. Residents can contribute clothing in good condition by putting the clothing in bags, and dropping the bags off at the clothing shed by the Cowell Gym entrance.

As part of our ongoing communications strategy, we maintain a Facebook page, and the Cowell Director sends out regular email updates to folks who have asked to receive them. If you'd like to receive these emails, please email cowellgymnasium@gmail.com . You can also like us on our Facebook page by going to [https://www.facebook.com/ShelburneRecreation](https://www.facebook.com/ShelburneRecreation/) .

The Recreation Committee would like to thank the people of Shelburne, in particular the Selectboard and Shelburne Highway Superintendent Mark Shippee, for their ongoing support. Lastly, we’d like to extend a special thanks to retiring Selectboard member, Joe Judd, who has been a supporter of recreation, and in particular to the Cowell Gym, over his many years of service to the town. Thank you, Joe. We will miss you.