

Valentine, John V. (2006) *Planning and Organizing Group Activities in Social Recreation*, State College, PA: Venture Publishing, Inc. 108 pp. \$17.95 ISBN -10: 1-892132-61-3

Reviewed by

J. David Waddell

Instructor

Department of Health, Exercise Science and Recreation Management
University of Mississippi

In *Planning and Organizing Group Activities in Social Recreation*, John V. Valentine utilizes a concise presentation style to cover the attributes of successful leadership in social recreation events. This book contains just over 100 pages, with over two-thirds of its content dedicated to game ideas and instructions.

The first chapter begins with a history of social recreation and concludes with sections on definitions, organization, and planning of social recreation events. Chapters two and three cover social recreation leadership and group dynamics. The information provided is presented in very basic form, serving more as a review of materials one would assume the student has already learned in a leadership or foundations course. The most valuable aspect of the book are the helpful hints provided throughout, such as the section titled, "Dos" and "Don'ts" of social recreation leadership or "Five Ways to Conduct the Same Activity." The remainder of the book is actual social recreation game and activity ideas to be carried out by groups.

This book offers more leadership and philosophical background to social recreation planning than other books I have read or used in class settings. Many social recreation books become just a catalog of games and activities, where Valentine instead offers hints and tips on philosophy, leadership, and organizational skills that make the book much more complete and user-friendly.

The game and activity sections are divided into categories to assist the game leader with the exact requirements needed for each event. A good many of the games found in this book are also commonly covered in other social recreation game books, articles, and print resources. The instructions are well-written with instructions on how to end the games and reminders about important safety measures to observe during the activities. A particularly good example was the description of the game, "Steal the Object." Having led this game several times I appreciated how thorough the instructions were. I also discovered new games and icebreakers I was not familiar with, such as in the "Cinderella Mixer" and throughout the "Square Dancing" sec-

tion. Each of these unfamiliar activities was explained with a thoroughness that made me feel comfortable enough to introduce them as a program leader—and with no further preparation needed beyond the instructions and guidelines included in the text.

The difficulties I found in the book come in the Social and Group Games section. While the book has a strict copyright policy many of the pencil and paper games call for you to photocopy the game without giving permission to do so. Also there is some evidence that the book is culturally bound to earlier eras, such as found in the game labeled “Ad Phrases.” This game could be out-of-date for some groups as it calls for teams to know advertising slogans, some of which are over twenty years old and would not necessarily be familiar to younger groups.

It is clear that in his preparation and research for this little book, Valentine did present a mixture of new and innovative games, as well as ones that have been around for ages. One unique game I have not seen before was the “Candle Bowling” game where candles are lined up in bowling pin fashion and the participant attempts to blow them all out in two blows. Scoring is done the same as in bowling.

The author concludes the book with sample discussion and test questions. All answers are provided. Also included is a bibliography, a short list of other helpful resources, and an index with listings by subject (but not activity names).

I believe this book would be most helpful in a class setting that was built around practical student involvement in game and activity leadership. I find the book to be a much better practitioner resource than an academic textbook, since it does not offer the needed depth regarding subjects like group dynamics and game leadership. Yet, while not a good stand-alone text, this book could prove valuable (especially given its low cost) as a supplemental resource in courses ranging from social recreation leadership to general programming.