

Social

Seven Dimensions of Well-Being Spotlight



NATIONAL
RECREATION AND PARK
ASSOCIATION

The Vision

Communities provide opportunities for socialization, connection, relationship building and belonging. Community members can develop and maintain healthy relationships and meaningful social connections, positively interact with others from different cultures and backgrounds, and contribute to the community.

How Parks and Recreation Promotes Social Well-Being

Parks and recreation is essential to social well-being. Parks and recreation provides spaces and programs that are welcoming. Parks, community centers and other public spaces provide opportunities for social connection and relationship building so community members can develop and maintain healthy relationships, forge meaningful connections and contribute to the community.

Examples of Advancing Social Well-Being

- Expand access to parks, trails, recreation centers and community gardens, and integrate small-scale infrastructure improvements like benches, shade structures, lawn games and picnic tables to support social and intergenerational connection.
- Activate parks, community centers and other spaces through community-driven and accessible programs and events that allow all community members to engage in a safe and welcoming environment.
- Launch a public awareness campaign about the social benefits of parks and recreation, encouraging community members to use spaces for social connection.
- Establish intergenerational programs (e.g., cooking classes, gardening, social clubs) that pair youth and adults together.
- Partner with children's museums, libraries and other local government services (fire, police, etc.) to host block parties, family nights out and parks after dark activities.
- Provide volunteer and community service opportunities.
- Facilitate community engagement and feedback events on an ongoing basis, ensuring previously less-represented communities are prioritized.
- Embed social and emotional learning into summer camps, afterschool programs, youth sports and other youth offerings.

In Practice

The City of Glenwood Springs, Colorado, exemplifies the power of parks and recreation in fostering welcoming communities. Led by Helaine "Laine" Fabijanic, a certified therapeutic recreation specialist, the city's therapeutic recreation program provides opportunities for individuals with disabilities to engage in various recreational activities, including adaptive climbing and gardening. Fabijanic's accessible approach ensures everyone, regardless of ability, can participate in existing programs like soccer with adaptive support.

Through community engagement and family involvement, the program creates a supportive environment where individuals like Isaac Alonso, who was born with disabilities, can thrive. Isaac's progress in climbing reflects the program's impact on physical, social and emotional well-being. Fabijanic's dedication to independence and continuous evaluation ensures personalized support for each participant. By building relationships and promoting inclusion, the program exemplifies the role of parks and recreation in creating resilient and vibrant communities that improve social well-being.

Learn More: bit.ly/GlenwoodSprings-In-Practice



Isaac Alonso climbs a rock wall. Photo by Joe Van Wyk, Courtesy of City of Glenwood Springs (Colorado) Parks and Recreation.