

Parks Department Updates

January 2021

January is usually the month where our basketball program takes up much of our priorities. With nearly 500 participants, it is by far the largest program we oversee, and one that we take a great deal of pride in. Unfortunately, the program was put on hold while we get through the pandemic, and we are still working out potential options for putting a basketball season together. The ASYB Board has been meeting regularly to go over options, and have set February 1 as the last date possible to get a regular season started. As that is only weeks away, it is likely the only other option for a basketball program in 2021 is some form of modified season in either the spring, summer or fall. One of several concerns we have with trying to put a program together away from the traditional winter season is overlapping with other programs and creating a competition for participants and dilemmas for players and parents as to which programs to sign up for. With that in mind, the ASYB Board will try to adapt any program run in the spring or fall with that in mind. A summertime program would not likely have as much of an overlap concern, but it is also difficult to run summer seasons due to families having difficulty making a commitment. Most importantly, we will need to get more information about what can be done within state and local health guidelines before making any concrete plans for any kind of program. Our hope is that with vaccinations on the rise and COVID cases dropping significantly, we might be able to make a decision on this by early spring.

One of several projects that have been proposed for Pirone Park is the creation of a Storybook Walk along the perimeter path. This would include extracting pages from children's books and placing them on signs that allow families to read a story as they walk the 0.4 mile loop. We have been working with the Ayer Library director Tim Silva and his staff to corroborate on this, and hope to get a system together that allows us to put up a different story every month or so. To get the project started, we will be putting up pages from the classic children's book Freight Train by Donald Crews in time to celebrate the town's 150th anniversary on February 14. We will be working over the spring to put together more storybooks and frames that can easily be swapped out, with hopes that one of our scouting troops may have a candidate that may want to take this on as a project.

The skating rink has been getting a great deal of use now that the temperatures have allowed it to fully freeze over. We are clearing it of snow and debris as needed and resurfacing it in the evenings and early mornings to keep the ice skateable. Generally between 15-30 people have been using it each day, mostly young families, and are doing a good job wearing masks and social distancing.

Jeff Thomas

Ayer Parks Director