



Helping Families

**GET UP
GET ACTIVE
GET OUTDOORS
GET PLAYING**

For Over 65 Years

Recreation inspires personal growth, healthy lifestyles and a sense of community which aligns with the mission of the Great Bend Recreation Commission to provide year round quality leisure, cultural, sports, fitness and educational programs that improves the quality of life in Great Bend.

When Diann Henderson, Executive Recreation Director mentions the Great Bend Recreation Commission (GBRC or "the Rec") is "a lot of things to a lot of people," she could be accused of making the understatement of the year.

After all, the GBRC offers hundreds of activities to tens of thousands of people each year. Those numbers are the perfect illustration of Henderson's mission in her role as executive recreation director – to provide comprehensive recreation services to the community. The programs and activities fall into several categories that don't seem to do justice to the quality and quantity of offerings for all ages. Some basic categories are sports, leisure, seniors, special needs, aquatics, fitness and wellness.

And then there's the indoor area for walkers, drop-in activities, after-school programs, kids day out, certified hunter-safety instruction, stop and learn educational sessions, classes for parents and their children, special events, art, theater, cooking and contests.



GBRC also is oftentimes the first opportunity for teen-age employment in town, and a welcoming place for volunteers.

To make all this, and more, come together, Diann Henderson, and her staff rely on a myriad of partners. Some of these include the City of Great Bend, USD 428, Barton County, private businesses, the Senior Center, Kansas Wetlands Education Center and other non-profit organizations. She noted, "the Recreation Commission board members and our partners are a dedicated group of individuals and organizations working diligently and collectively in providing additional recreation opportunities with a purpose in mind, whether it's to affect health, raise awareness around conservation, connecting our community, or providing additional educational opportunities for our youth in after school programs and for seniors at the recreation centers or to simply learn how to enjoy and appreciate nature."

The Recreation Commission has a long and rich history of providing affordable public recreation programs in Great Bend. The Recreation Commission has been opened for business since 1949. The Recreation Commission moved to the Carl Soden Recreation Building, 1214 Stone, in 1969 and the 3-year-old Activity Center at 2715 18th provides after school activities, exercise classes and sports programs. With this very robust recreation system it is no small task providing these recreation programs, special events and management of 162 part time, seasonal and 7 full time employees.

Henderson has been in this business for 32 years. She has been involved in all aspects of the organization. As a Great Bend native, her college academic interest was concentrated on education and computer technology at Barton Community College. She graduated from Friends University with a degree in business management. She grew up as a competitive softball player, volunteer softball coach and runner. She ran track on the first girls' track team at GBHS.

Six other full-timers round out the administrative staff and support staff. "The seven of us have over 67 years of experience in the public recreation field," she said. "These recreational professionals are certified through state and national affiliations, and each has expertise in certain areas."

"The staff also strives to provide a positive sports environment," she continued. "We visit with coaches and parents about sportsmanship and have a code

of ethics for both. Our volunteer coaches are the backbone of our sports programs and they participate in the NYSCA Certified Coaches Continuing Education program. This year we certified 101 volunteer coaches in our sports programs. An economic development benefit for Great Bend, Henderson noted that this year there were 169 baseball or softball teams that came to Great Bend for tournaments. This included the Kansas Collegiate Athletic Conference Regional Baseball-Softball Tournaments and the KSHSAA 2A-1A state tournaments and Hap Dumont tournaments.

Currently, the Recreation Commission organizes 276 youth and adult sport teams the opportunity to play outdoor soccer, football, indoor soccer, baseball, softball, basketball and volleyball. Staff works very closely with the City of Great Bend and the USD #428 in utilizing public and school facilities for these programs.

The Recreation Commission produces a program activity guide three times a year that is mailed out to all USD #428 patrons. In addition communicate to families and patrons are made through Facebook, the GBRC website. www.greatbendrec.net and through newsletters.

Great Bend is an active and engaged community because of Great Bend Recreation Commission. All this programming caught the eye of Blue Cross Blue Shield of Kansas last year when it bestowed its prestigious Blue CHIP Award to GBRC, the city, school district, Barton County Extension and Eldercare.

Even considering the lengthy list of programming that the Recreation Commission provides, Henderson doesn't hesitate to say that she and her staff are actively engaged in seeking new partners, discovering new trends of recreation programming and are always looking for ways to meet the needs and wants of our community.