

THE ALABAMIAN

A PUBLICATION OF THE ALABAMA RECREATION AND PARKS ASSOCIATION • FALL 2020



Innovation

LEAD Workshop Wrap-Up





Alabama Recreation and Parks Association

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ALABAMA RECREATION & PARKS ASSOCIATION

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We represent more than 900 dedicated Alabama Recreation and Parks Association professionals.

Places
We have member agencies in over 92 cities and towns in the state of Alabama representing a majority of the state's population.

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From the
President
Gary Minor

Caw Caw!

In my home community of Tuscaloosa, we work very hard to think and work as innovatively and entrepreneurial as possible. I know my fellow parks and recreation peers across the state carry the same spirit in their communities. Parks and recreation professionals will always find a way to get it done!

I want to start by saying that Fall Workshop was great! Montgomery did an excellent job hosting our group and the education sessions were very informative. A special thanks is due to the hard workers that made it possible and the flexibility of our attendees and hosts. Well done!

I attended the LEAD program at Camp Skyline in Mentone, AL recently and I must express how valuable and worthwhile it was to attend. This workshop had everything, quality classroom education, high ropes courses, delicious meals, and fond fellowship in a beautiful, relaxing environment. Please consider nominating deserving individuals from your department to attend next year. It is well worth it!

I would also like to encourage you to attend this year's annual conference in Orange Beach. Our education and conference committees have been working diligently to plan and provide a safe, valuable, and fun time for you this coming January. This conference is always a highlight of my work year and I look forward to it each time. This year, despite its oddities and challenges, will be no different. I hope to see you there!

In any event, please continue to check in with ARPA through the virtual meetings set up by the state office. These have proven invaluable as we share ideas on how to navigate our way through this upside down year.

I wish you well! See you in 2021!

Gary Minor
2020 ARPA President

From the
Executive Director
Natalie Norman



Greetings!

I am convinced that the many parks and recreation professionals across our great state are some of the most innovative, creative, and resilient people out there. It gives me great joy to work and serve you as Executive Director of ARPA. I know our communities will continue to reap the benefits of all your great work! Keep it up!

First, I would like to thank those that made it to Fall Workshop in Montgomery. Special thanks to the City of Montgomery for helping us out big time! We had some quality education sessions and it was so great to see everyone again!

We have also just completed the annual LEAD program at Camp Skyline in Mentone, AL. Eight LEAD candidates attended this year's workshop, formed lifelong friendships, and have taken back many valuable lessons to their communities. We welcome you to apply and nominate your staff to attend next year's workshop. Ask any one of our attendees, they will tell you it was well worth it.

The association now turns its attention directly to our annual conference to be held in Orange Beach. We look forward to sharing with you the fruits of the hard work and dedication of our state conference and education committees. This is the conference where we rebound. We really want to see as many of you as possible learning, growing and having a little fun at conference this year!

ARPA wishes you well as you finish out 2020. Keep on innovating. Keep on serving your community and fulfilling your mission. Keep on keeping on! See you in Orange Beach!

Sincerely,

Natalie Norman, CPRP
Executive Director



LEAD Workshop Wrap-Up

The purpose of the LEAD Program is to train potential leaders and enhance current leaders in the recreation field. The training provided assists the selected candidates in the development of skills that will make them effective leaders within their agencies, their communities, the profession, and ARPA/ARPF. LEAD is not a “one and done” program, but a flash point for stimulating growth as a parks and recreation professional and as a ARPA leader. It’s like the Hotel California, you can check in, but you can never LEAD.

This year’s LEAD Program saw eight nominees endured two and half vigorous days of hard knocks education and absolutely no cell phone service at Camp Skyline in Mentone, AL. The humble group of eight enjoyed classroom sessions, delicious meals, fellowship, smiles, games, campfires, high ropes courses, and much more along the way. Each one of this year’s candidates left with many valuable lessons and applications for their leadership roles in their communities. They also strengthened their relationships with their peers across the state.

Rewarding both professionally and personally, LEAD is a highly valuable opportunity for those in ARPA. If you or someone in your department is interested in attending, nominations and applications for next year's class are due in mid-September 2021.

For further information on LEAD, contact Robin Brothers at rbrothers@fortpayne.org.

2020 LEAD Class:

- Bradlee Colburn - Tuscaloosa
- Gabrielle Filgo - Auburn
- Lorena Guttowsky – Dothan
- Kasey Kaschak – Phenix City
- Chevelle Lee – Trussville
- D. Tyrell McGirt – Pelham
- John A. Milner, IV - Dothan
- Gary Minor - Tuscaloosa





Innovation



Albertville - Innovation

How has your park and recreation agency innovated and adapted lately?

We have adapted our operational standards according to state and local COVID requirements. A good example is that we're hosting an MMA event this Saturday inside on our hardwood court event space and everyone will be required to wear masks. We also hosted a charity event where tables were limited to 4 people and were spaced 10' apart. When we open our Fitness Center and Indoor Aquatics Center on November 17th, we will operate at 50% capacity and encourage social distancing. We will always adhere to the local and state COVID requirements and that often requires us to adapt to ensure the health & safety of all our guests.

We purchased Fitness Center and Group Exercise equipment that is extremely innovative. Industry-leading LifeFitness & Hammer Strength supplied our free weights, cardio machines, functional movement equipment and more. Lots of reasons why our equipment is innovative, it is also extremely user-friendly and accommodates people of all ages/fitness levels. This video helps explain some of the awesome features that sets us apart in the marketplace. <https://youtu.be/4lcrvxpWsQ>

We entered into an agreement with industry-leader Les Mills for some of our Group Exercise programming/classes. Les Mills classes are required to be taught by certified instructors who are thoroughly vetted, and their classes can be adapted to all fitness levels. The classes are high-



energy but also provide a welcoming environment. The classes are choreographed, change throughout the year, and focus on specific fitness outcomes.

This type of innovative equipment and group exercise programming exhibits our commitment to our Mission, dramatically improving the health & economic vitality of the Sand Mountain Region.

What tips, tricks and tools can you recommend to foster creativity in your agency's efforts?

Building a culture of Excellence and Winning. This our daily focus and drives our organizational and Team Member developmental goals. It complements our Mission and provides a clear purpose for us as a Team. Our culture is defining us as we're entering into the marketplace, and we're working very hard to establish it. The advice I have for other organizations is to establish a clear identity and hold the Team accountable to follow-through with it. It sounds simple and easy but often times it's not the case. It requires a tremendous amount discipline, focus and buy-in. Winning requires Excellence, Excellence results in Winning. They go hand-in-hand and drive us in our journey to become one of the best sports, entertainment and events venues in the country.

What programs, facilities, and people at your agency are trailblazers and trendsetters?

One initiative we're starting on the programming side is incorporating high school/jv coaches into our youth recreational leagues. We want to create consistencies in language, drills, philosophy, approach, etc. from our youth recreation programs all the way to the varsity teams. This of course has been done before but on a consistent basis in our area. We're really excited about this effort and think it will result in a better youth experience in our leagues, and also produce better results for the jv/varsity teams over time. Providing a stronger conduit throughout the growth path for each sport between the high school programs and us will create wins for both parties, and most importantly, help improve the experience of the participant/athlete.

Fort Payne - Birds Bees & Butterflies

Fort Payne Parks and Recreation recently participated in Parks4Pollinators with NRPA. In lieu of having a one- day large gathering, we elected to promote parks4pollinators all month on our social media and have a month long treasure hunt in our parks.

We hid plastic birds, bees and butterflies – some of our main pollinators- in our parks. When kids found them, they brought them to Wills Valley Recreation Center and received a fun activity pack. Each activity pack included pollinator worksheets and crafts related to pollinators.

During the month, we did a chalk art obstacle course in the Alabama Walking Park.



*WE WERE OUT IN OUR PARKS
TODAY AND LOST
SOME OF OUR FRIENDS!*

If you find any of these guys in our parks,
bring them to Wills Valley Rec Center
and get a prize!



Hartselle - Zoo, Seniors and Bob Ross

Hartselle Parks and Recreation invited the community to participate in a “Drive Through Zoo” over the summer. This event encouraged Hartselle residents to display stuffed animals in their yards. We set a date and time and challenged others to post the number of animals found. One participant found more than 1,000 animals!! This event was a huge success. It allowed families to follow CDC Guidelines while enjoying a day of fun together.



National Senior Citizen Day was celebrated with the Hartselle Senior Center and Hartselle Parks and Recreation on August 21 with a Drive Through Luau. Members of the senior center were given goody bags filled with certificates from local restaurants, candy, greeting cards and other goodies when they arrived for their meals. Even though it was a rainy day, it brought a little sunshine to their day!!



Hartselle Parks and Recreation challenged residents to figure out where Bob Ross was painting in our park. The pictures posted on our Facebook page. Everyone that commented to correct answer was entered into a drawing for park and recreation memorabilia. We also hid painted rocks along our walking trail. We posted the pictures of the rocks on Facebook. Found rocks were returned to the park and recreation office in return for park and recreation hats or shirts.



Huntsville - Dancing for Diversity

Due to the tense and stressful times, Healthy Huntsville hosted Dancing for Diversity, a free socially-distanced dance fitness event to promote health and diversity on Friday, September 18. During the event, attendees experienced a different dance instructor every 15 minutes to include Zumba, cardio hip hop, Bollywood, line dance, Salsa and more. "It is important for exercise to be inclusive," said Healthy Huntsville coordinator Ashley Polesak. "We want everyone to feel represented when we have Healthy Huntsville events, that's why we strive to have instructors of different ages, races, sizes and sexes!"

Physical activity is key to long-term health for everyone. Regular movement prevents chronic disease, controls weight, strengthens muscles, enhances mental health, reduces stress, improves sleep, and more. During these stressful times in the pandemic, Healthy Huntsville and Parks & Recreation are dedicated to continuing to offer activities that meet local and state health guidelines. We had 7 feet separation markers on the grass area at Butler Green and face masks and hand sanitizer were at the Healthy Huntsville tent. Participants were free to not wear masks while

dancing, but were encouraged to wear them in any communal area.

The event was open to all skill levels and family-friendly. There were around 100 participants at the event, many that danced for 2.5 hours straight!



A • R • P • A

THE ONE WHERE WE REBOUND

ALABAMA RECREATION AND PARKS ASSOCIATION
STATE CONFERENCE • JANUARY 24-26 • 2021 • ORANGE BEACH AL



Call for Articles!

If you would like to be published in a future issue of The Alabamian Magazine, please send your article and any graphics to the State Office at nnorman@arpaonline.org.

The theme for the next issue is “Something Old. Something New.”

Show us something old that you’re proud of! Show us something new too!

We all have that historic park or feature that deserves to be shown off. Send in some photos and tell us its story. We’d love to hear about it!

It’s now 2021, so what’s new with your department? Got a new park? Maybe a new program? Did one of your holiday events take on a new twist? Tell us about it. Send pics too!

The deadline for consideration in the Winter 2021 issue is Feb 5th.
Please call 334-279-9160 with any questions.

Pelham - Innovation During Coronavirus



The Coronavirus has impacted operations for Pelham Parks and Recreation and forced the department to be innovative with its approach to delivering recreational services. By consulting with other Parks and Recreation departments from across the country and following local COVID safety guidelines the City of Pelham has found success with offering recreational options during the pandemic that focus on getting people outside in parks, bringing families together, and building community.

On a Friday evening last April families piled into the parking lot at Pelham City Park awaiting instruction for the Pelham Family Car Scavenger Hunt. Everyone remained in their vehicles and at promptly 6:30 p.m. clues to Pelham landmarks were posted on the department events Facebook page. Families that arrived at each landmark, took pictures, and posted to the event Facebook page were entered into a drawing to receive a gift certificate to a local restaurant. Several dozen carloads filled with families participated in

the event. The scavenger hunt brought families together and gave citizens a reason to explore different areas of the Pelham community.

There is nothing new about Music in the Park however, Pelham Parks and Recreation was able to offer a special event that was safe. The music series was held outside, the event attracted people



Pelham - Innovation During Coronavirus



to the park, and the event allowed everyone to social distance. After getting the idea from other Parks and Recreation departments, large circles were spray painted on the field and citizens were encouraged to share a circle with members of their household. Face coverings were required for entry, exit, and moving around while at the event but face coverings could be relaxed once citizens were seated in their circles.

Music in the Park

Scarecrows in the Park was another opportunity for the community to come together. Families, businesses, and organizations from around Pelham were encouraged to put together a scarecrow display and showcase it in Pelham City Park from October 17 – November 1. The scarecrow display along the trail in City Park turned the park into a destination location during the Halloween season.

Scarecrows in the Park

Pelham Parks and Recreation also offered a couple of art programs for youth. Painting Pumpkins in the Park and Chalk the Park gave young people an opportunity to gather with their friends, complete an art project, and enjoy being outdoors.

Pelham Parks and Recreation: Painting Pumpkins in the Park

Chalk the Park

The City of Pelham Parks and Recreation is led by D. Tyrell McGirt, Director of Parks and Recreation. Alicia Walters, Assistant Director of Parks and Recreation, is over the Recreation Division of the department. Creating community through people, parks and programs is the aim of the department.



Tuscaloosa - BOO! in the Park

Upon cancellation of many local Halloween events in our community due to COVID-19 concerns, PARA staff sought to provide safe entertainment and catharsis for our community. There had also been a call for someone, anyone in Tuscaloosa to take up the mantle of drive-in movies. Our community has seen the success of events in other communities, and with our movie theatre closed, we thought it would be the perfect way to provide a positive Halloween experience to our community's ghouls and goblins.

The event consisted of two separate, but complimentary components. The first, Trick or Treat Trails encouraged participants to compete in STEAM related challenges to win some candy, but many nice prizes as well. Complete with decorations and a pumpkin decorating competition, this event was very popular, with well over 100 registered. PARA is excited about this venture as it begins the expansion from a simple summer and holiday day camp to a fully featured, year-long youth program.

The second component was the drive-in movie. Thanks to the generosity of our community sponsors and partners,

this was an incredible success. Over 130 cars with an estimated attendance of 500 people showed up to watch *Hotel Transylvania* and *Hocus Pocus* on a giant movie screen. Lawn seating and car viewing was available. This was our staff's first attempt at a drive-in movie, broadcasting audio via FM transmitter, and drawing many physically distanced circles. Signage was kept on theme and very positive. We are very proud of this event's success and look forward to doing more in the future.



Campers enjoy swimming at Andrew Belle Pool

Tuscaloosa - Veterans Day Drive-In Ceremony

A drive-in Veterans Day ceremony was held at Veterans Memorial Park in Tuscaloosa on Wednesday, November 11. The threat of COVID-19, along with a significant chance of inclement weather was set to put a damper on this year's program. In fact, it had already shuttered the Memorial Day program back in May.

comfortably and safely in their cars on site. This is a great example of physical distancing that allows for the often-missing social component to events these days. It speaks to the determination of our Veterans here in Tuscaloosa along with the dedication of our park staff to take on this challenge and make it special. To all veterans everywhere, thank you for your service!

Taking the valuable experience of operating a pop-up drive-in movie a few weeks prior, PARA staff along with the dedicated Tuscaloosa Veterans Memorial Park Committee put on a safe ceremony that made all area Veterans proud. The event drew approximately 150 attendees to hear remarks from guest speaker, Major General Lee, Congresswoman Terri Sewell, and Committee Chair Colonel Duane Lamb. All veterans of each military branch were recognized, and a traditional ceremonial bell was rang 11 times to mark the occasion.

Park staff innovated by broadcasting the program via FM radio to those sitting



Auburn - Innovative Events

In these unprecedented times Auburn Parks and Recreation has modified and changed the way we hold events. The great news is we have been having events and continue to have events all through the fall. In October we had 3 concerts at Kiesel Park. One with Auburn Community Orchestra on Sunday, October 4 titled Keep the Music Going. Over 200 residents attended the concert which required masks entering and exiting the concert. Areas for seating was clearly marked so families could practice social distancing.

Three great Adult 50 plus events were also held in October. A senior fishing rodeo, putt-putt golf and ice cream party and an outdoor movie. All events allowed seniors to safely see their neighbors they have been missing.

Our biggest event of the fall Down Trick or Treat has been modified to a Drive-Thru Trick or Treat on the Auburn Parks and Recreation Campus. On Friday, October 30 families will drive through the complex, which will be a spooky wonderland, parks and recreation staff, public safety and community businesses will pass out candy.



Lincoln - Socially Distant Events

My Trailblazers and Trend Setter is Collin Aiken, AD, he brought in Sand VolleyBall and indoor Girls Volleyball. Collin and our Maintenance Supervisor Patrick Gibson, built our outdoor Sand Court along with some help of the Drew Middle and Lincoln High School Volleyball Teams. Along with Shelly Barnhart one of our city council members. The court has been used daily and the more people know the more people know we have it. This being our first year with indoor girls has been a success, we have 3 teams. The best compliment has been from them and their parents.

Collin also developed a Youth Cornhole practice week and Youth Cornhole Tournament, some of our seasonal staff was able to help with this event and had a great time. One of the parents said the tournament was really competitive between the girls' and boys' teams.

We have introduced indoor archery shoot appointment times, you call make an appointment and we place you in and place out the equipment. Allowing only 3 experienced shooters in at a given appointment time.

The fitness center is open but as with archery we allow 4 people in by appointment only. Appointments are 45 minutes with a 15 minute cleaning time between. It is working out well as so are our patrons.

Basketball gym is open again by appointment only, with 4 people being allowed in and rotation of the balls after each appointment. The times are 45 minutes with cleaning and sanitizing between. Senior citizens really miss our luncheons and we miss them.

November 13th we had a drive thru pick up of lunch and good bags, just to say hello and see their faces.

Halloween, we held – “Fright Night at the Farm” drive thru. At the end of the drive, we had a trunk or treat with the trunker giving the candy to one treater inside the vehicle.

Christmas Parade will happen but reverse, 2020 Lincoln Reverse Christmas Parade and Tree Lighting. Tree Lighting first with patrons staying in their vehicles as Santa Lights it up. No Choir this year but music will be played and a vocalist to perform two songs. Then off to the Lincoln Park Sports Complex for a ride through viewing of floats and areas that have been decorated for all to enjoy, a wave good bye on the way out from Santa's helpers to be given a note that Santa is at Randolph Park for Pictures and social distancing will be practiced from mask and two chairs to be set up and 6ft apart, for Santa in one and the visitor in the other.

During the beginning of Covid 19, wanting to keep everyone in the community involved and interested, we had on Facebook, Instagram and Twitter, “Meet Your Lincoln City Staff” interviewing with a list of questions and picture placed daily on each social media, for the ones that did not want separate interviews, due to many reasons and time, we did a group questionnaire and group picture. Also on social media we played trivia, remember when, and pictures of days gone by. Wanting the youth to stay involved we offered daily greetings in different languages, find-a-word, seek a pic, and trivia just for them.

This is a little of what we are doing and have during this unusual 2020 Year of Monday.



Opelika - SportsPlex safely hosts Senior Health Fair

The Opelika SportsPlex and Aquatics Center has hosted a Health and Resource Fair for senior adults for the past seven years. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the 2020 Health and Resource Fair was up in the air, so to speak. Would the SportsPlex be able to provide a safe environment? Would vendors be willing to come? Would seniors be willing to come?

The COVID-19 pandemic caused many seniors to neglect their health. Fear and uncertainty kept them in their homes, isolated. Their physical and mental well-being took a hit. The staff of the SportsPlex Adult Activity Center (AAC) knew that despite the enormous hurdles they would have to combat, having the Health Fair this year was more important than ever.

Valeri White, AAC Director, began putting together a plan to present to City Hall. It detailed new procedures and precautions that would provide vendors and seniors the peace of mind that they would be safe. These changes included:

- Less vendors. White prioritized vendors that would provide valuable services like flu shots, vision screenings, depression screenings and nurses performing glucose, cholesterol, hemoglobin and blood pressure checks.
- Social distancing. All vendors were spaced 6 feet

apart. Those providing services had ample space for waiting seniors in measured and marked socially distanced spaces.

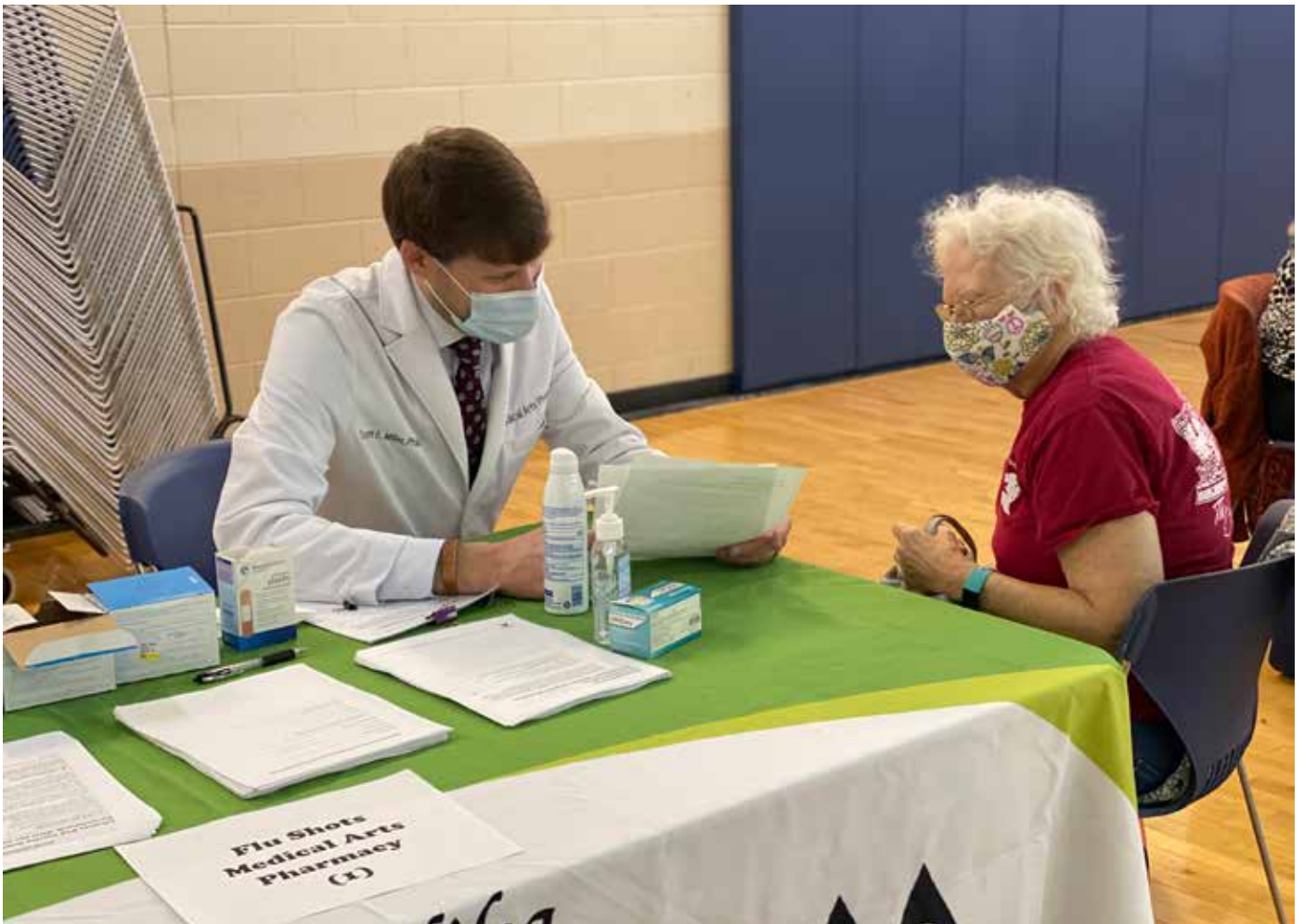
- Traffic control. Planned traffic patterns ensured that seniors and caregivers could remain six feet apart and that their paths would not cross with others.
- Masks. All vendors and participants were required to use facial coverings throughout the duration of the event.
- COVID-19 screenings. All vendors and participants were required to participate in a questionnaire and no-contact temperature check before entering the health fair.



Opelika - SportsPlex safely hosts Senior Health Fair

Thankfully, the 2020 Health and Resource Fair was successful. The Opelika SportsPlex created a one-stop-shop for seniors to take advantage of a variety of services, gather numerous resources and hold valuable conversations with health care providers all under one roof, without the time constraints of a doctor's visit. The turn-out was better than expected with 91 seniors attending.

The Opelika SportsPlex is thankful to the City of Opelika for the confidence they instilled in their staff to provide a safe environment and to the event sponsors and vendors who were willing to take a chance on the event during uncertain times.



Enterprise - Innovative Events for Seniors

Due to the COVID-19 Pandemic the Enterprise Senior Center has been closed since the middle of March 2020, but we are still serving our senior clients. Home-bound meals are being delivered daily and center meals are picked up drive-thru style by our center members.

To keep our members' spirits up we are continually striving to come up with ideas on how to keep them involved. We reassure them that even though the center is closed, we have not forgotten them and that they can call on us at any time if they need assistance or help with anything.

One of the activities we are doing with them is "Parking Lot Bingo." Each member participating parks their car in the parking lot – staying 6 feet apart. We give them each bingo cards and call out the bingo numbers through a speaker system. If a member has a "Bingo," they beep their car horn and we take the prize to them.

In between, we read them funny jokes to bring smiles to their faces, and they have enjoyed that tremendously! We also share personal stories about our lives to keep them engaged.

In years past, we had a Halloween Party for our seniors, but had to come up with another idea since we can't be together. Instead we will organize



Enterprise - Innovative Events for Seniors

a “Halloween Meal Pick-Up”. We will decorate the drive-thru with Halloween decorations, play “Spooky Music” through a speaker system and our team members will be dressed in “Halloween attire” as they give out the meals. The seniors will also receive a goody bag from our local literary club, who is normally the sponsor for the Halloween Party each year.

Another activity is “Parking Lot Story Time.” We choose stories – depending on the month – and read them to the participants. We also encourage our participants to read a story of their choosing,

that they can read from their car with the help of a microphone.

Other ideas we are planning to implement in the future are lip sync battles and funny skits. The re-opening will consist of a luau- inspired party to welcome the seniors back to the Enterprise Senior Center – ALOHA!

We understand that it is difficult for our members not to be able to socialize with each other and that they miss each other’s company!



2020

Calendar of Events

August

11 ARPA State Archery Tournament
Dothan, AL

September

22-24 CPSI Course
Virtual Training

29-Oct 1 ARPF Fall Workshop
Orange Beach, AL

November

4-6 LEAD
Camp Skyline, Mentone, AL

6-7 ARPA Youth Flag Football
State Tournament
Trussville, AL

21-22 ARPA Soccer State Tournament
Dothan, AL

January 2021

24-26 ARPA State Conference
Orange Beach, AL