

Good Morning Reader

2 programs earn awards for city recreation panel

BY DON SPATZ
READING EAGLE

The four-year-old Reading Recreation Commission has won two awards from the Pennsylvania Recreation and Park Society, which recognized the commission and the Reading Public Museum for Excellence in Recreation and Parks.

Presented at the society's annual banquet last week in Lancaster, the awards were for the commission's Chef Sprout! urban cooking program for kids 10 and older, and for the museum's The Wright Build competition among playgrounds.

They come on the heels of two awards given to the commission's tennis program, named a Middle States Premier Provider for 2015 by the U.S. Tennis Association, which also named tennis director Larry Zerby as the 2014 USTA Middle States pro of the year for Pennsylvania's eastern district.

The new awards, and others the commission has earned in recent years, come at a critical time for the joint venture of the city and the Reading School District.

The sponsors had agreed to five years of funding that ends in 2016, and talks will begin soon on a new agreement.

For now, the commission is focused on the awards.

"The success of these two programs can be directly linked to the support we receive and highlights the willingness of local volunteers to make a difference for the youth we serve," said commission Executive Director Daphne Klahr.

Its programs include youth and adult instructional sports programs and leagues (including tennis), fitness classes, summer playgrounds, club activities, cultural arts programs, leadership programs, nutrition classes, after school care and local special events.

Matt Lubas, recreation supervisor, said more parents are playing tennis



COURTESY OF READING RECREATION COMMISSION
Guided by Chef Antonio Lavigna of TLC Catering, children from the 11th and Pike and Third and Spruce playgrounds learn how to cook well using only ingredients available at corner grocery stores and bodegas, as part of the Reading Recreation Commission's award-winning Chef Sprout! program. Participating were, from left, Jada Lopez, Kya Washington, Anthony Mayan, D'Cora Medina and Bianca Seabury.

along with their kids, and it's a lot easier running a program when the parents are there.

"We have great people, and the families are really buying into what we're doing," he said.

In the Chef Sprout! program, Chef Antonio Lavigna of TLC Catering teaches at-risk urban youth how to prepare healthy meals using what's available to them from local bodegas and corner grocery stores.

Meal plans in the six-week program use only ingredients that are readily available to participants to prepare delicious and nutritious meals.

They focus on choosing healthy ingredients, food safety, preparation

and cooking techniques, and plating and presentation.

The Wright Build Design Competition got summer playground kids to design and build a structure that fit on a three-foot square board, built of at least 75 percent recyclable material, and included at least one primary Frank Lloyd Wright design element.

Participants learned about Wright's life and work by visiting the museum before starting and learned design and teamwork during the process.

Eleven playgrounds participated, including four from outside the city.

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