

Dan Kelly: Reading Parks and Rec gets top state honor

Tuesday May 2, 2017 12:01 AM

By **Dan Kelly**



You probably have heard that the Reading High basketball team won the state championship.

What you may not know is that the Reading Parks and Recreation Commission, a partnership of the city and the Reading School District, has been named the best in the state for 2017.

The commission and the Friends of Reading Hospital were recognized for Excellence in Recreation and Parks by the Pennsylvania Recreation and Park Society at its annual awards banquet at the Hershey Lodge.

The commission actually won two awards this year: the most prestigious award, "Agency of the Year," and "Out-of-School Food, Nutrition, and Healthy Lifestyle Program," which was in partnership with the hospital volunteer group.

There were only 10 programs that won Excellence award, which recognizes the role of recreation and parks as an essential community service.

"The success of the healthy lifestyle program reflects the support we receive from our staff, volunteers and community leaders with creating and running quality programming," said Daphne Klahr, executive director. "These awards place a positive spotlight on the great work that the Reading Recreation Commission is doing and shows how powerful community collaborations are in improving the lives of city residents."

Klahr said the parks department tries to teach children who participate in its programs the benefits of healthy eating and exercise. The commission has a series of programs that increase the opportunity for low-income communities to get healthy meals and engage at-risk youth in a positive manner.

"The program also increased the number of healthy meals that children in low-income communities received during out-of-school times from 22,000 in 2015 to 38,000 in 2016," Klahr said.

She said the healthy lifestyle program received funding and in-kind support from The Friends of Reading Hospital, Berks Community Action Program and other groups.

The state parks commission, in recognizing Reading's parks department, said it has in the last five years transformed itself into a vibrant and thriving public recreation agency that is improving the quality of life and creating more opportunities for the residents of Reading.

If you knew Daphne and her staff, you would not be surprised.

Contact Dan Kelly: 610-371-5040 or dkelly@readingeagle.com



DAN KELLY | REPORTER/COLUMNIST

Reporter Dan Kelly covers City Hall for the Reading Eagle.

Phone: 610-371-5040

Email: dkelly@readingeagle.com