

July 25, 2016

Highlights

- Decrease of illicit behaviors when staff are present including: drug and alcohol use, verbal and physical fights and vandalism.
- Greet and assist Artesian Well users collecting water.
- Active participation in activities to include: reading, chess, cribbage, and other activities.
- Decrease in trash



Artesian Commons Park Update

POSITIONS STARTED JUNE 1

The new positions for the Artesian Commons Park include a Well Host and a Seasonal Park Ranger. The positions were hired in late may and started June 1st . They went through approximately 10 days of training. The training included shadowing the Downtown Ambassadors, classroom training from Community Youth Services, and walking along with OPD's downtown walking patrol. The training also included the departments standard orientation and training and a verbal de-escalation course.

The new staff members began their duties at the Artesian Commons Park on June 13th. The first week was challenging with the Ranger receiving threats on the first day. OPD Officers showed support by coming through on foot to make contact with the staff and park visitors. This support has been very important to the success of the work being done at the Artesian Commons. The staff continued to return and educate folks about the rules and provide programs. Through these conversations, relationships have been built and out of that there has been compliance to the park rules and regulations.

ROLES OF THE POSITIONS

Well Host— This position is designed to facilitate fun and engaging activities for all park users and provide a welcoming presence to all including improving the experience of well user.

Seasonal Park Ranger— The goal of the Park Ranger is to educate visitors of the park rules and regulations, gain compliance to those rules and create a presence in the park. The Park Ranger has the authority to trespass individuals who exhibit threatening behavior or repeatedly violate the park rules. The Park Ranger has no other enforcement authority and relies on OPD to enforce the Olympia Municipal Codes.

BEHAVIOR FOCUS AREAS

The Well Host and Park Ranger have been focused on three main behaviors: violence, drugs and alcohol and litter. They also keep an eye out on parking issues.

PROGRAMMING

The Well Host offers a variety of activities daily to include:

1. Basketball
2. Book cart for reading
3. Chess, checkers and cribbage
4. Art

Other partnership activities supported by the staff include the Bridge Events by CYS, the Games of S.K.A.T.E., and outreach by the Downtown Ambassadors.

SAFETY

Park visitors are no longer doing the following negative behaviors in the park while staff are present:

1. Drinking alcohol
2. Smoking marijuana
3. Selling, buying, distributing and/or using drugs
4. Physical and/or verbal fighting and harassment of others

The volume of trash has decreased from 9 cubic yards to 6 cubic yards a week. Maintenance staff report that overall the conditions in the park have been improved, especially on the days that the Well Host and Park Ranger work.

Other problem areas still exist within the downtown area, however the Park has improved when it comes to illicit and negative behaviors, thus improving the experience for the Artesian Well user and park visitors. According to some visitors' account "...the park is more peaceful and feels safer."



"Good day today. We had an altercation this afternoon around 5:35pm. One of our well participants was having a hard day and seemed to be off a bit. He started screaming at everyone in the well (which isn't like him) about trash and people killing the world. I escorted him out and spoke with him around the corner (away from everyone else's view). I had Garrett follow me out for safety reasons. His name is ____ and he has slowly been declining (mentally) the last few days. I calmed him down enough and have him walk it off. He headed down 4th Ave. and didn't return to the well. After that, there were no other issues!

On a side note, the group that was drinking yesterday was at the well again today. They approached us and apologized for their actions and their lack of knowing the park rules. Garrett and I educated them on the rules and they were happy to follow them while they were inside the well."

Park Ranger Lee Wyatt

Frequent reports are delivered at the Artesian Leadership Committee meetings (1st Thursday of every month) from partners, community members and City staff. To attend or get more information, please contact Paul Simmons, Director Olympia Parks, Arts and Recreation at psimmons@ci.olympia.wa.us.

Written & presented by:

Sylvana Niehuser, Park Ranger

Olympia Parks, Arts & Recreation

sniehuse@ci.olympia.wa.us | 360.753.8365