

# Piva appointed as permanent recreation director

By Michaela Kennedy

The recreation center at the waterfront was alive with action at four o'clock Tuesday afternoon. A group of gamers handled controls in front of the big screen. Two boys played table tennis in the lobby. A game of basketball echoed with rowdy players.

Bill Piva smiled. Appointed as director of parks and recreation by the Town Council last Monday, Piva has become the change he wanted to see at the community center. A change back to a quality of life he remembers growing up with in the same building, on the same corner.

Piva was named interim director of the recreation department last spring, taking a hiatus from the police department. "I knew a couple of months into the job that this is what I wanted to do," he affirmed. Now, a year later, his permanent title is official.

Piva reflected back to his youth, when recreation directors the likes of Don Gillis and Bill Gurney ran the community center. "They didn't just open the Rec, they took an interest. There were many policemen then who took an interest in the kids, too. That's what I wanted to do," he said.

Piva thought of his role models many times during his more than 20-year career as a Jamestown police officer. Not too many years ago, he would stop to talk to groups of kids he saw hanging around the streets. "They would have nowhere to go," he said. Piva



Recreation Director Bill Piva, right, took a time-out with teen John Rafanelli who stopped by the center for a game of hoop.

Photo by Michaela Kennedy

knew the solution. "The key was getting kids more involved in this building."

In June of last year, asbestos was found, putting off construction of the teen center until the chemical was removed. Earlier this year, Ron DiMauro Architects tested the structure and reported the recreation center was a sound building. In a walk through the building, Piva pointed out design touches that were added as part of the renovations. "DiMauro did a lot of little things," Piva noted. "He added details that make the building look good."

The corner recreation office is still in a remodeling phase, but the update will allow room for the new director, recreation clerk Andrea Masterson and seasonal playground supervisor Jill Goldstein to work comfortably.

Piva has already implemented

sports programs that he thought were lacking at the center. He has also tightened the belt on policies which do not always meet with favorable opinions. One policy change includes a nominal fee charged to reserve the building space. Some people complained about the policy and other fee increases, but Piva said that he was trying to recoup some of the operational costs of the center, saying, "I'm here to run an efficient department that's not a burden on the taxpayers and still provide diverse activities for everyone."

Piva mentioned that some organizations have expressed displeasure with the changes he has brought to the department. "I've

been through five town administrators here, all with a different style," he noted. "I'm going to have a different style. I didn't take this job backing off."

Piva went on to give credit for recent successes at the center to Melissa Minto, the teen coordinator. "Melissa and I are the ones that are in front of the kids every day," he said. Since the official opening of the teen center, after school use of the community gathering spot has tripled. "We had a regular group of 15 to 20 kids come to the Rec center," Piva noted. "Now we sometimes get as many as 60."

Piva has, in a sense, become like his childhood idols. He remembered that, as a child, he knew there was a trusted adult he could find if an issue came up. Now, he is the role model for the children of Jamestown. "It's what we do," he said.

## Register now for Jamestown baseball

Registration has begun for the 2008 season of Cal Ripken Baseball in Jamestown.

The deadline to register for the Major League, ages 9 to 12, is March 24 and April 4 is the deadline for the Minor League, ages 7 to 11. No one will be allowed to register after those dates.

To register, visit the web site at [www.jamestownri.com/baseball](http://www.jamestownri.com/baseball). Download the form, fill it out and send the form and payment to: Art Spivack, 25 Lawn Ave., Jamestown, RI 02835.

For more information, call Steve Cirella at 423-1425.

Anyone wishing to be a head coach or assistant coach must register with Cirella before the start of the season. A criminal background check is required for all coaches.

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