

**Wellsville Chamber of Commerce
Chamber Spotlight
Wellsville Joint Recreation Commission
By: Morgan Adams**

Our 27th Chamber of Commerce Spotlight is the Wellsville Joint Recreation Commission, also known as WJRC. WJRC's new director, as of September of 2021, is Bernie (Coons) Smith. Bernie grew up in the Wellsville community, graduated from Wellsville High School and taught and coached within the Wellsville school district for several years. Along with many other duties, Bernie manages the office, plans sporting events, and maintains the fields, the park, and the concessions.

Bernie had worked for the WJRC part-time for six years. When she became director, she decided to dedicate her time to making the youth sports programs even better than before. Since then, WJRC has added additional programs such as Mad Science Camps, Pre-School Tumbling Classes, and a Pokémon Club to their list of offerings. Bernie is also excited about the new playground equipment that will be coming to Saddle Club Park this spring.

Bernie stated, "WJRC couldn't do it without the community. Without the kids staying involved in sports and activities, there wouldn't be a community recreational program. The WJRC loves being involved with the youth through sports and activities. We do our best to make a difference to the entire community."

WJRC also hired Debbie McCullough in September of 2021. She initially volunteered for the WJRC, but since being hired she has developed additional program offerings for adult/senior trips and activities for the community such as casino trips, Branson tours, New Theater Dinner Shows, a Lunch Bunch gathering once a month and Aqua Zoomba.

Debbie stated, "I have been blessed to be able to work at the Wellsville Joint Recreation Commission and with the Wellsville community. I love doing and planning activities for others. I truly enjoy my job."

Debbie and Bernie also worked with the school district this year to develop the "Late Start Program". Many parents took advantage of this no cost program throughout the school year to maintain their typical work schedules. On USD 289 collaboration days, paras watched the students in the mornings until teachers were out of their meetings. Not only was Debbie in charge of this program, but she also assisted with the children.

Other events Debbie has organized includes no-cost children's activities such as activities hosted by the Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks. The KDWP will be coming to Wellsville and providing various activities that are hands on and free for the kids. WJRC will also be hosting a Hunter's Education Course this fall, as well as an outdoor movie in August.

Another new program created by the WJRC was the “After School Program” for elementary students. They averaged an enrollment of 30 students each month. One adult, as well as several high school students, worked in paid positions to care for the students who were in the program. This service was available every day the elementary school was in session. They would go from 3:00 pm to 5:30 pm Monday through Friday. The fee was \$120 per month per child and enrollment was on a first come first serve basis.

This program, along with youth sporting activities have created a tremendous opportunity for employment for the high school students of Wellsville. From keeping books, to operating the clock, to officiating, high school students are getting the opportunity to work with and mentor young children.

As the WJRC works to develop their vision, they are striving to find opportunities for the community year-round. They are working at improving communications and promotions to the public about additional events and activities coming to the community. They also want the community to know they are continually adding more and more events.

Over the next few years, WJRC wants to grow all their programs and hopefully add additional tournaments. They want to develop and thrive within each of the activities they have now and are going to add.

To find out more about what the WJRC has to offer, see their Facebook page (WJRC Wellsville Joint Recreation Commission), or check out their website at <https://wjrc.recdesk.com/>. Another great way to also receive WJRC texts about updates/cancellations/programs, etc. is through Text Caster.

Although the softball and baseball fields are located at Saddle Club Park, the WJRC’s office is located at 320 Pendleton Avenue, Wellsville, next to the park. If you have any additional questions or would like to find out more about the new programs being offered through WJRC, contact Bernie or Debbie at (785) 883-4532. Help us support our community programs by getting involved with what makes the Wellsville community great.

One final thing—The Wellsville Joint Recreation Commission is always looking for volunteer coaches for all recreation leagues—baseball, volleyball, soccer, softball, t-ball, basketball, and flag football. If you are interested in volunteering your time and talents, please give them a call.

WJRC

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