

Updates | Special Events

Programing | Sports | Tournaments

Lakes | Parks | Trails



Recreation Services Newsletter

824 E. Gurley St. Prescott, AZ 86301

FROM THE DIRECTOR'S DESK



PRESCOTT CELEBRATES AMERICA'S 250TH ANNIVERSARY WITH AN UNFORGETTABLE FREEDOM FESTIVAL *By Kristy Diaz-Trahan - Director*

On July 4, the City of Prescott proudly joined communities across the nation in commemorating a historic milestone—America's 250th Anniversary. The 2026 Freedom Festival at Pioneer Park was more than an Independence Day celebration; it was an opportunity for residents and visitors to honor 250 years of American history, recognize the sacrifices that have preserved our freedoms, and celebrate the values that continue to unite our nation.

Over 11,000 gathered throughout the afternoon and evening to enjoy a festival filled with patriotism, community spirit, and family-friendly fun. The event reflected Prescott's tradition of bringing people together while celebrating the nation's past, present, and future. From young children experiencing the excitement of their first Fourth of July celebration to lifelong residents continuing treasured family traditions, the Freedom Festival created lasting memories for every generation.



The success of this landmark celebration was made possible through the generous support of our sponsors. Their commitment to the community helped provide an exceptional experience for attendees while demonstrating the importance of public-private partnerships in creating meaningful community events. Their support allowed families to enjoy a full day of entertainment, activities, and one of the region's premier Independence Day celebrations. Our sincere thank you to our “Big Bang” Sponsors, Findlay Auto Group. “Red, White & Blue” Sponsors, Buckey’s Casino, Yavapai Casino, Rugged Pilot & Sparklight.

Festival grounds were filled with local vendors, community organizations, and a diverse selection of food vendors, creating a lively marketplace that celebrated the entrepreneurial spirit of Prescott. Guests enjoyed delicious food, connected with local businesses and nonprofits, and explored booths showcasing the many organizations that help make Prescott a vibrant and welcoming community.



FEATURED PARK:

PRESCOTT CELEBRATES AMERICA'S 250TH ANNIVERSARY WITH AN UNFORGETTABLE FREEDOM FESTIVAL

One of the day's most anticipated activity, the Hot Dog Eating Contest, entertained enthusiastic crowds with spirited competition and plenty of laughter. Spectators cheered on contestants as they competed for championship bragging rights, adding another memorable highlight to an already exciting day.

Families found activities around every corner, including inflatable bounce houses, giant water slides, yard games, arts and crafts, interactive activities, and the ever-popular mechanical bull. Children and adults alike found opportunities to laugh, play, and celebrate together, reinforcing the City's commitment to providing recreation opportunities that strengthen families and build community connections.

As the evening progressed, live music filled Pioneer Park with energy and excitement. Local bands, The Cheek Tones and Ponderosa Grove kept the crowd entertained with performances that celebrated American traditions while bringing neighbors together through music. Families gathered near the stage, danced with friends, and enjoyed the festive atmosphere as anticipation built for the evening's grand finale.



The spectacular fireworks display served as a fitting tribute to America's Semiquincentennial, illuminating the Prescott sky in celebration of 250 years of freedom, perseverance, and opportunity. The dazzling display provided a powerful reminder of the enduring ideals that have shaped our nation and inspired generations of Americans.

Events of this scale are only possible through remarkable teamwork. City of Prescott employees from Recreation Services, Public Works, Police, Fire, and numerous other departments dedicated countless hours planning, preparing, coordinating, and executing every aspect of the celebration. From managing logistics and ensuring public safety to supporting vendors, entertainment, and guest services, City staff worked tirelessly behind the scenes to deliver a seamless experience for thousands of attendees.

The City of Prescott extends its sincere appreciation to our sponsors, vendors, performers, volunteers, community partners, and dedicated staff who helped make this historic celebration a tremendous success. Most importantly, thank you to everyone who joined us in celebrating not only Independence Day, but also America's 250th Anniversary. Together, we honored our nation's rich history, celebrated the strength of our community, and created memories that will be cherished for years to come.

PROGRAMMING ADVENTURE AWAITS

By Mattie Smith - Recreation Coordinator

Introducing Our New Programs

Recreation Services is excited to continue expanding our program offerings with new opportunities that encourage creativity, adventure, and lifelong learning. We're proud to highlight two unique programs that invite participants to explore new passions while building connections with other in our community.

We're thrilled to be partnering with Old Soul Creatives to offer a new series of painting classes that inspire creativity in a welcoming and relaxed environment. These hands-on workshops provide artists of all experience levels the opportunity to create beautiful works of art while learning new techniques from talented local instructors.

In the July course, participants worked with our skilled instructor to create a beautiful floral painting. It was a wonderful evening in a room full of laughter and encouragement as artists let their creativity flow. The July class was filled to capacity, so don't wait to register for the upcoming August 23rd event! Whether you make plans to attend with friends, family, or solo, you'll be sure to enjoy an evening of creativity, connection, and fun while taking home your very own unique masterpiece.

Coming this fall: Adventure begins on the trail with our new Mountain Biking Clinics and Lessons, designed for riders of all skill levels. Set against the breathtaking backdrop of Prescott's iconic Granite Dells, these clinics provide participants with the skills and confidence to safely enjoy one of our area's most treasured outdoor recreation destinations.

Led by experienced instructors from Arizona Mountain Bike Academy, each session combines hands-on coaching with guided rides, creating a fun and supportive environment where riders can develop new skills while exploring the stunning landscapes of the Granite Dells. Whether you're learning the basics or looking to refine your technique, instructors will guide you through essential bike handling skills, trail etiquette, safety practices, and obstacle navigation. You'll gain confidence while experiencing the incredible natural beauty that makes Prescott a premier mountain biking destination!



July Paint workshop with Old Soul Creatives
Next event August 23



These new programs reflect our commitment to providing recreation opportunities that enrich the lives of our community members. From outdoor adventure and fitness to arts and culture, Prescott Recreation Services continues to grow its programming to meet the diverse interests of residents of all ages. We invite everyone to explore something new this season! Registration is now open, but space is limited. Visit the Prescott Recreation Services website or follow us on social media for registration information, upcoming class dates, and additional program announcements.



Register by scanning QR code
or by going online to:
<https://prescottaz.recdesk.com/Community/Home>

If you have additional questions, you can email
parks.programming.staff@prescott-az.gov

PARKS | LAKES | TRAILS

JIM MCCASLAND WILLOW CREEK PARK: A PREMIER DESTINATION FOR RECREATION AND OUTDOOR ADVENTURE

By: Samara Rice - Recreation Coordinator

Jim McCasland Willow Creek Park has become one of Prescott's premier recreation destinations, offering residents and visitors an exceptional place to play, gather, and explore. Recent upgrades throughout the park have transformed it into a vibrant community hub that blends modern amenities with the natural beauty of Prescott's iconic Granite Dells.

Families will enjoy the newly upgraded playground, designed to provide a safe, engaging environment where children of all ages can climb, slide, and explore. With modern play features and ample open space, the playground encourages active play while creating opportunities for families to spend quality time together outdoors.

The park's athletic facilities have also received significant improvements. The renovated multi-use ball field provides a high-quality venue for youth and adult baseball, softball, soccer, football, and community events. Enhanced playing surfaces and improved field functionality help ensure an enjoyable experience for athletes, coaches, and spectators alike. Convenient, upgraded restroom facilities further enhance the visitor experience by providing clean, accessible amenities for park guests throughout the day.

Basketball enthusiasts can take advantage of the two full-size outdoor basketball courts, complete with lighting that extends play into the evening hours. Whether practicing individual skills, organizing pickup games, or enjoying friendly competition with family and friends, the courts offer a welcoming space for players of all ages and skill levels.

Dog owners will appreciate the beautifully renovated Willow Creek Dog Park, one of Prescott's most popular pet destinations. Featuring separate areas for large and small dogs, new turf, water stations, and cooling misters, the off-leash park provides a comfortable environment where pets can run, play, and socialize while owners relax in shaded seating areas.



One of the park's greatest attractions is its direct connection to the scenic Willow Lake Trail system. Visitors can step from the park onto miles of breathtaking trails that wind through the spectacular Granite Dells, offering opportunities for hiking, trail running, birdwatching, photography, and enjoying panoramic lake views. The convenient trailhead makes Jim McCasland Willow Creek Park an ideal starting point for outdoor adventures while remaining just minutes from downtown Prescott. Willow Lake Trail.

Whether visiting for a youth sporting event, an afternoon at the playground, a pickup basketball game, time with a four-legged companion, or a peaceful hike through Prescott's remarkable landscape, Jim McCasland Willow Creek Park offers something for everyone. Its combination of upgraded amenities, recreational opportunities, and unparalleled access to nature makes it one of the City's most treasured parks and a destination that truly reflects Prescott's commitment to healthy, active living.



BEAR DOWN IN P-TOWN!

U OF A STUDENT BRINGS GRIT, HARD WORK, CREATIVITY AND JOY TO PRESCOTT

By: Ryan Harlow - Recreation Supervisor

This summer, the City of Prescott Recreation Services Department welcomed University of Arizona student Kiersten Carlson as an intern. From the moment she joined the team, she quickly proved herself to be an invaluable part of the department. Her curiosity, willingness to jump into every opportunity, and strong work ethic made a lasting impression on everyone she worked with.

Throughout the summer, Kiersten assisted with special events, recreation programs, and daily department operations. Whether she was preparing for a community event or taking on a new assignment, she approached every challenge with enthusiasm, creativity, and a positive attitude.

For Kiersten, the internship was a full-circle experience. Having grown up in Prescott, she spent much of her childhood enjoying local parks, trails, and community events. Those experiences sparked her curiosity about what happens behind the scenes to create memorable experiences for the community. "I always wondered how everything came together," she shared. The internship gave her firsthand experience with the planning, coordination, and teamwork that make successful recreation programs and events possible.

Among the many events she supported this summer, the Prescott Fourth of July Freedom Festival quickly became her favorite. Watching months of preparation transform into a celebration enjoyed by thousands of residents and visitors gave her a new appreciation for the work that takes place long before the first guest arrives.

During her time with Recreation Services Kiersten learned many things but one of the biggest lessons Kiersten she says she will carry into her future career is the importance of teamwork. She learned that successful events aren't built by individuals working alone, but by dedicated people communicating, supporting one another, and working toward a common goal.



Outside of work, Kiersten enjoys reading, thrifting, sewing, crafting, and spending time outdoors. At the University of Arizona, she is majoring in Psychology and Italian while pursuing a minor in Political Science. She hopes to build a career in humanitarian politics. This fall, Kiersten will continue her journey with an internship at Migrants of the Mediterranean, a global humanitarian storytelling nonprofit that documents the experiences of migrant communities. The opportunity reflects her passion for understanding people and making a meaningful difference.

Before leaving, we asked Kiersten what advice she would offer future Recreation Services interns. "Don't be afraid to jump right in," she said. "Ask to take on projects, work hard, and get involved with as much as you can. You get out what you put in." That mindset is exactly why Kiersten made such a positive impact during her time with Recreation Services. She embraced every opportunity, contributed wherever she was needed, and became a valued member of the team.

We're grateful Kiersten chose to spend her summer with the City of Prescott Recreation Services Department. We wish her continued success as she returns to the University of Arizona and begins her next adventure. Thank you, Kiersten, for an outstanding summer. Bear Down, and best of luck in all that's ahead!