

In This Chapter:

What Is Leisure? 72

What Is Recreation? 73

Historical Development of Recreation: A Brief Overview 74

- Renaissance Period (1350-1600) 74
- Reformation Period (1500s-1600s) 74
- Industrial Revolution (1700-1900) 74
- Roaring 20s 75
- Depression Years (1929-1945) 75
- Modern Era (1950-Present) 75
- Recent Developments 76

Benefits of Recreation 77

- Personal Benefits 77
- Social Benefits 78
- Economic Benefits 78
- Environmental Benefits 79

Factors Affecting Our Recreational Interests and Pursuits 80

- Early Educational Experiences 80
- Family Influences 81
- Social (Peer) Influences 81
- Cultural Influences 81
- Media and Other Influences 82

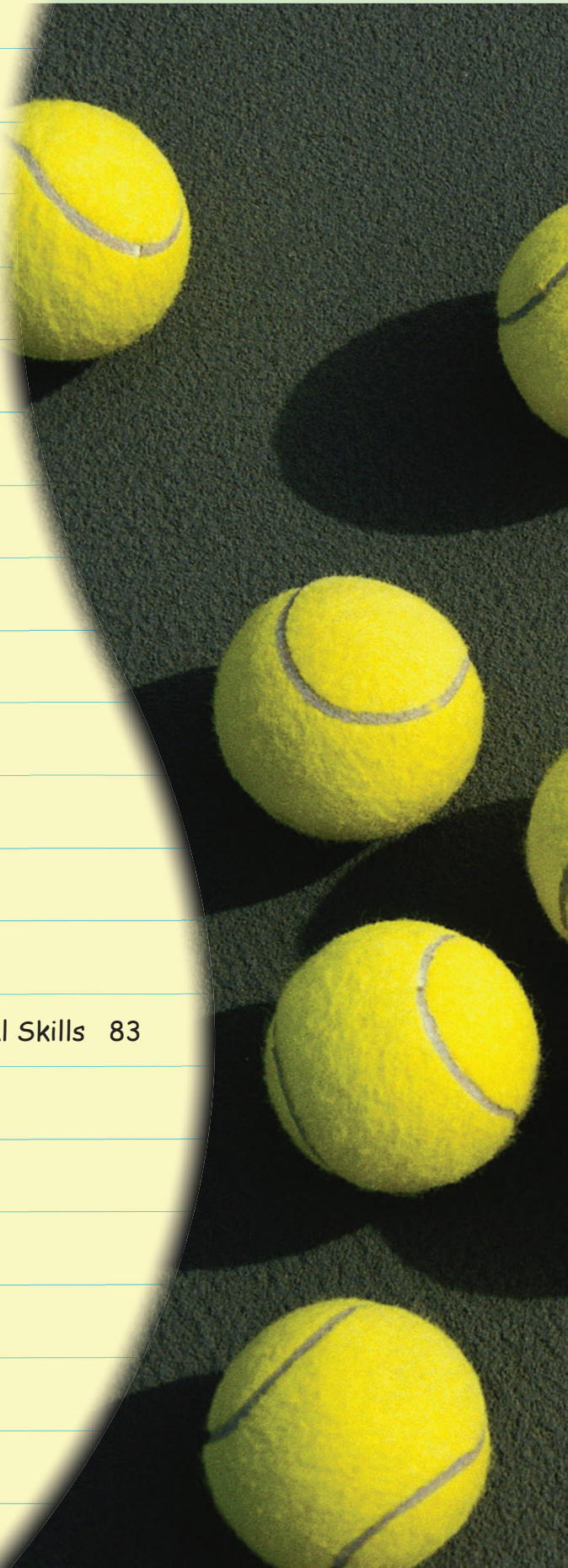
Barriers to Recreation and Leisure Pursuits 82

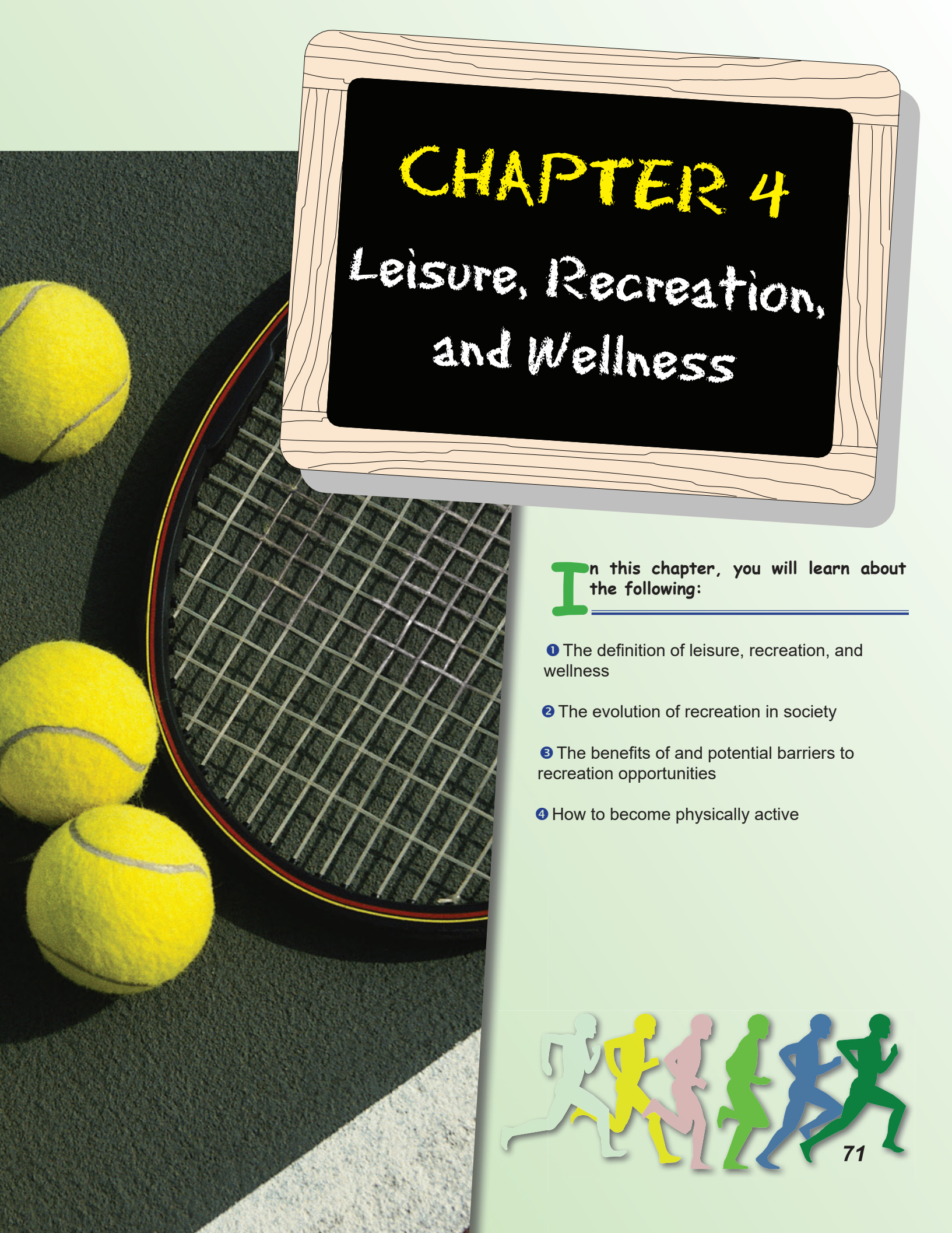
- Economic Factors 83
- Perceived Lack of Necessary Physical and Social Skills 83
- Time Constraints 83
- Work and Family Commitments 84
- Other Constraints 84

Health and Wellness 86

- Definitions and Dimensions 86

Putting It All Together 88






CHAPTER 4

Leisure, Recreation, and Wellness

In this chapter, you will learn about the following:

- 1 The definition of leisure, recreation, and wellness
- 2 The evolution of recreation in society
- 3 The benefits of and potential barriers to recreation opportunities
- 4 How to become physically active





“Don’t drop out, drop in.
Don’t cop out, compete.
Don’t exit, excel.”
Pierre Elliott Trudeau

Health is an important resource for living, but it is very specific to people’s lives. Consider the ways recreation, leisure, and wellness are expressed in your own life and the ways you set out to contribute to your health through being physically active, spending time with friends and family, enjoying time to contemplate the world around you, and challenging yourself to reach new heights. To achieve good health, it is important to personalize the information presented and to reflect on the various dimensions of health from your own perspective to make them relevant to your daily life.

What Is Leisure?

What does
leisure mean
to you?



Leisure is free time that can be spent as you see fit. Think about how you spend your time each day. When you eliminate the necessary tasks that you must complete each day, such as work, school, sleep, meals, chores, and grooming, what is left? Your mental list now includes all the activities and pastimes that make up your leisure time.

We schedule our leisure time each day so that we can participate in the activities that we enjoy. This time can be spent with family, with friends, in solitude at home, or out in the community. The possibilities are endless!

Unstructured free time can be used to daydream, read a book, listen to music, nap – anything you want to do; it’s not necessarily planned use of time, but it’s not necessarily wasted time, either. It is your body’s chance to rejuvenate itself.

Leisure Defined

- Leisure is “time when one is free to relax and do as one wishes.”
- Leisure is “freedom from time-consuming duties, responsibilities, or activities.”
- Leisure is “the time when you are not working or doing other duties.”
- Leisure is “time spent in or free for relaxation or enjoyment.”





What Is Recreation?

Recreation is participation in an activity that you enjoy. The various definitions (see the box *Recreation Defined*) imply that the activity will improve us or restore us in some way.

Recreation Defined

- Recreation is “the refreshment of one’s mind or body after work through activity that amuses or stimulates.”
- Recreation is “refreshment of the strength and spirits after toil; amusement; diversion; sport; pastime.”
- Recreation is “an activity that diverts or amuses or stimulates.”

Recreation is very personal. Some students enjoy playing sports, whereas others enjoy watching TV, downloading music, or playing video games. What one individual views as **work**, another may view as the perfect recreational activity. Many people consider cooking and baking an enjoyable and relaxing hobby; others find peace in their gardens, pulling weeds and planning where each plant would look best. However, there are also people who view these activities as dreaded chores. These people might prefer to spend time reading books by their favorite authors. They may even join a book club (i.e., a group) in order to compare their evaluations of a book with other book lovers. Other people do not enjoy reading and read only when necessary. Recreation, therefore, is an individual preference, and it can be performed alone or as part of a group.



Recreation is very personal. What may be relaxing and enjoyable to one person may be considered a chore to another.

Work or Play?


Personal perceptions of activities can dictate whether a specific activity is regarded as recreation or work. For example, Gerry does not own a car and there is no public transportation from his house to his work. He must ride his bike to work each day, rain or shine. He is thinking of finding a part-time job in order to save money to purchase his own car.

In contrast, Sam loves to ride his bike and is planning to join a cycling club in his community. Gerry clearly views his bike riding as work and nothing more, while Sam enjoys riding purely for the pleasure of it.






Historical Development of Recreation: A Brief Overview




So where did the concept of recreation come from? Recreation has historically been dependent on social class. The working class (feudal system) had little leisure time, although annual celebratory events were held, with festivals, dancing, contests, and so on. The ruling class had far greater amounts of leisure time, during which they participated in formal balls and sporting matches, such as polo and fox hunts, as well as garden parties and teas.

Renaissance Period (1350–1600)




During the Renaissance period, upper-class citizens involved themselves in activities such as painting, music, literature, science, and education. A well-educated man could ride, fence, dance, and paint, among other things. This era involved a great cultural movement in the arts and education, and people became more civilized in their pursuits.

Reformation Period (1500s–1600s)



In the 1500s and 1600s, in what was known as the Reformation period, the Protestant work ethic was introduced to colonial America. At first, hard work, or **toil**, was necessary to ensure survival, but over time, hard work came to be valued as the road to economic success, social acceptance, and religious superiority. Recreation and leisure were earned through daily hard work. Perhaps this is where the motto “work before play” originated. If you had ample time for recreation and leisure, you were considered lazy and a loafer.

Industrial Revolution (1700–1900)



During the Industrial Revolution of the 1700s, working-class people did not have the time or energy for recreation. Twelve-hour work days were common, and laborers worked six days a week. Leisure opportunities were few and far between for these blue-collar workers. Three social classes emerged, from the poorer blue-collar worker to the middle class and finally the wealthy upper class. New wealth from industrialization created the new middle class, and a new group of upper class became competition for the already established elite.

There was no mingling of the classes during this era. For the poorer working class, recreation included visiting the taverns or pubs and attending fairs and exhibitions. The middle class attempted to model themselves after the upper class by pursuing



more sophisticated recreation activities such as playing the piano, singing, and drama. Of course, during this time, the upper classes enjoyed many forms of recreation such as bird watching, fishing, cricket, polo, and fox hunts.

Roaring 20s

The Roaring 20s bring to mind pictures of carefree young people touring in the newly invented automobile or dancing the Charleston in speakeasies – illegal after-hours clubs. During this time, recreation and leisure became more popular, and people began to recognize the need to enjoy leisure time once and a while. They worked hard so that later they had the time to enjoy a little recreation and leisure. Although work was still regarded as important and recognition was given to those who embraced the strong work ethic, people began to socialize more, organizing dances, outings, and family functions. Dancing was extremely popular, and public dance halls, tea rooms, Broadway musicals, and movie theaters opened. Jazz made its debut, and professional sports such as tennis, golf, and football emerged from the amateur circuit. Gambling also became a popular form of recreation.

Depression Years (1929–1945)

During the Depression years, recreation became less formal. People came together and played their musical instruments or had picnics at the local beaches and went swimming. Square dances and get-togethers to make ice cream were the norm. Big bands and swing music were popular, and many nights were spent around the radio, listening to this music or broadcasted sermons and soap operas. Movies now had sound, and many people escaped the stresses of everyday life by attending the movie theaters on a regular basis.

Modern Era (1950–Present)

Fundamental changes to recreation and leisure occurred in the 1950s. Average middle-class citizens began to have discretionary income (i.e., extra money that could be earmarked for fun and leisure). They wanted to finish work each evening to enjoy a night out, read, or watch television. With transportation faster and much more convenient, people could begin to travel for enjoyment instead of just for work, and with an increase in yearly incomes, people could retire earlier and enjoy themselves.





Municipal multipurpose recreation facilities that include a swimming pool, gymnasium, fitness center, ice rink, and possibly a library are present in many cities. This provides one-stop shopping for an entire family's recreation interests. But at the other end of the spectrum, technological advancements have taken over for physical activity. One example is that you no longer need to get off the couch to change the channel on the TV. Entertainment is provided by way of televisions, video game consoles, computers, and mp3 players. Technological entertainment can now travel in cars, on planes, or to remote locations (e.g., Game Boys and portable TV/DVD units). Gone are the days of roughing it! We are in constant communication with each other, on a much larger scale than in the past. Unfortunately, these technological advancements have caused us to be more physically inactive than any generation before us. Although technology can provide many hours of recreation, we need to recognize that it does not necessarily promote a healthy and active lifestyle.

Recent Developments

Recreation has become increasingly important in our society. Families look forward to evenings and weekends when time can be spent together doing the things they enjoy as a group. This can include camping, weekends at the cottage, ski days, hiking, movie nights, and attending community events. Our society has recognized this shift in family priorities from working long hours and weekends and has adapted programs and facilities within our communities to reflect this trend. Trail systems, skateboard parks, waterfront boardwalks, parklands with benches, playground equipment, shaded areas, sport pads, and walking paths are becoming mainstream because they offer something for the whole family to enjoy.

Recognizing the importance of recreation and sports as part of a healthy and active lifestyle, parents spend time driving their children to sports activities, watching their games, and volunteering. It has become a form of social entertainment for parents. Although family recreational activities are on the rise, separate activities for adults remain strong, such as adult sports leagues, golf, skiing, and fitness memberships.

If you were to ask those within the workforce today if they enjoy their careers, many would say that they enjoy what they do, but they make sure they have time to enjoy their recreation pursuits as well. In fact, recent studies suggest that people are willing to sacrifice larger salaries for more time off.



Benefits of Recreation

Aside from the obvious physical advantages of active participation in recreational activities, recreation also provides various other personal, social, economic, and environmental benefits. Brief descriptions of these benefits are provided in this section.

Beyond the Physical

Participation in recreational pursuits not only affords positive physical health benefits but also provides opportunities for children to develop self-esteem, self-confidence, perseverance, humility, dedication, and respect for others; to explore their skill potential; to learn friendship, teamwork, and communication skills; and to share good times with others. Physical activity and recreation are embedded in a more holistic perspective on health. In other words, health is the capacity of an individual to interact with his or her environment and to work toward fulfilling his or her potential.



Participation in recreational pursuits provides opportunities to learn about friendship, respect, communication, and teamwork.

Personal Benefits

Participation in recreation can energize you and improve your self-esteem and physical appearance.

- ▶ Promotes physical fitness and active living
- ▶ Develops fine and gross motor skills through physical activity
- ▶ Improves self-confidence
- ▶ Gives a more positive outlook on life
- ▶ Decreases stress
- ▶ Creates a more positive self-image
- ▶ Provides the opportunity to learn new skills
- ▶ Improves problem solving, tolerance of others, and leadership

“We do not stop playing because we grow old; we grow old because we stop playing.”
George Bernard Shaw

