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CITY OF PROVIDENCE

Vincent A. Cianci, Jr.  
Mayor

## DEPARTMENT OF RECREATION

Louis Santiano  
Director

Telephone 421 - 7740 Ext. 365 to 368

Casino, Roger Williams Park, Providence, R. I. 02907

IN CITY COUNCIL

JUN 7 1979

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WHEREUPON IT IS ORDERED THAT  
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*Rose M. Mendonca* CLERK

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Submitter:

*Louis Santiano*



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### I.

#### Foreword

This department is extremely proud of the accomplishments achieved since May 10, 1975. These accomplishments -- notably innovative and progressive programs -- will be explained in some detail.

In this department, as in few others, the imprint of the administration and the director are easily discernable. Throughout these past four years the administration instituted much needed reform; in other areas this department created programs. In both cases the concern has always been for all the people of Providence.

Of special concern and consideration is the effort of the administration with the young and old handicapped citizens of this city. They, in turn, have expressed their satisfaction many times.

Many other new and innovative programs have been started. Most notable and the subject of this report:

The Key  
R.I. Amateur League  
Camp Cronin  
1. Senior Citizen Program  
2. School of Oceanography  
Summer Lunch Program for Children



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1.

### The Key

In 1977 while attending a meeting at the Joslin Community Development Corporation (JCDC) reference was made to the high incidence of child molestation and abuse among children whose parents both work and the child is left to his/her own resources until the parents return.

A social-recreational program was begun to demonstrate the need for this type of effort. The program was called "The Key" -- symbolic of the house key hung around the necks of children of working parents. The program was deluged with applicants.

Several community based groups have initiated similar programs which was the original intent for the creation of "The Key". The JCDC recently received federal funds to operate this program.



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2.

### Athletics

This department has eliminated some athletic programs which were over emphasized and detrimental to the well being of the youngsters involved. Adults, often misguided and overzealous in attempting to prove their worth as coaches, used children to further their selfish aims and objectives.

This department sponsors a variety of athletic activities throughout the entire year. Most of these activities are centered around fourteen recreation centers, 42 playgrounds, eight middle school programs, seven swimming pools, Pleasant View School Recreation Program, Camp Cronin and a variety of private programs. A constant effort is made to dovetail all public and private agencies involved in recreational activities.

Boxing has recently been introduced in two city owned facilities and has been well attended.

In 1976 this department re-established the amateur baseball league. This league, defunct for several years, began with 6 teams in 1976 and now has eleven. Several young men have already had major league tryouts and several are playing with minor league teams.

Softball in the City of Providence has efficiently been reorganized, professionalism has been added to the administration of the many leagues and over 3,000 players now enjoy this everincreasing sport. More playing fields will be needed as well as lighted fields in order to accommodate the large number of teams -- male and female.



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### Athletics (continued)

Lighted baseball fields are going to be needed if the amateur is to flourish. As of the present time this league plays most of the games at Providence College, Rhode Island College, Brown University and Moses Brown. A lighted field would attract even more teams and would resolve the problems of travel, logistics and participation.

Soccer and Rugby are becoming more popular and they too are in need of more playing areas. It is currently a near impossibility to accomodate all of the teams requesting fields.



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### Camp Cronin:

In 1976 the former Providence Junior Police Camp was re-dedicated in honor of the former director of recreation, Mr. John P. Cronin. This 35 acre area, known during the second world war as Fort Natanael Greene (South Reservation), is bordered by the U.S. Coast Guard Lighthouse and the Atlantic Ocean. There are few city owned areas that are as picturesque or as usefull for recreational and educational programs as this former military observation installation.

It became immediately evident, in 1976, that this area needed to be developed beyond use, for an eight week summer period, as an overnight camp for children. (This department conducted the "Junior Police Camp" for the summer of 1975 and found, after following the prior 25-year procedure, that children (boys only) did not want to go to this camp. The aggregate attendance, for eight weeks, was 126. The per capita cost exceeded one hundred and fifty dollars; the barracks were dilapidated, the toilets didn't work, the roofs leaked and there was only one exit in each barracks. The fences were down or missing, gapping holes in the ground attested to many years of neglect and the entire area was overgrown and dangerous. The only building that was habitable and in good condition was the director's house. (In prior years the director of recreation lived at this camp from May to September.)

Since 1976 these decrepit and dilapidated barracks and observation towers have been demolished. Two of these buildings have been refurbished, with heaters installed, with the intent of using them every day of the year.

The first program initiated was for the senior citizens of the city. Although a new venture the program attracted 3,918 seniors the first summer of operation. They were transported by city busses, approximately 80 per day, five days per week; they were given a free hot meal and a complete and busy program each day. Outdoor lawn furniture and a variety of equipment added and adds great enjoyment to the day's activity.



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The response to this program has been exceptional. In 1978 more than 7,000 seniors were bussed to Camp Cronin. A nurse was added to the staff, programs have been added, staff has been trained and more funds have been expended. Cronin Learning Center of Oceanography

The major concern for this camp has been, and should always be, to get complete utilization -- every day of the year. With this in mind the Cronin Learning Center of Oceanography was started in November of 1978. The staff was trained at the U.R.I. School of Oceanography and at the Alton Jones Center. Books and materials were purchased, a curriculum devised and printed and consultations were held with the Providence School Department. They gave us complete and full support. The program was formed to provide instruction on tides, tidal basins, shorelines, jettys, etc., for all fourth grade children of the City of Providence. All fourth grade teachers have participated in planning sessions and most, to this date, have already attended. When the program terminates for this academic year, June 7, 1979, more than 1,000 fourth grade students will have participated in this program at Camp Cronin.

A great deal of pride, intelligence and determination has been poured into this program by the administration, school administrators and staff. What this program could become is limited by the initiative and desire of this department. It should become a model for other cities and states.

### Further utilization:

In order to further utilize this area the recreation department has been taking requests from various organizations and agencies that care to use the facility on the weekends or nights. As of the present time, May, 1979, these agencies will be using the facility during the summer months:

The United Society Association  
Providence School Department Administrators  
Samaritans  
East Side Community Action  
Holy Ghost Church  
Providence Police Department  
N.E. Turkey Biologists  
Shore Migratory Bird Society



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### Pleasant View School Recreational Program

In 1976 the administration advocated a pilot, 16 week, recreational program for handicapped children and adults at the Pleasant View School. The program became an instantaneous success. Parents, teachers, school administrators and handicapped -- young and old -- participated in all phases of the program. In 1977 funds were approved for a 30 week, academic year, formal handicap program for school aged children from Pleasant View School, Birch School and Kenyon Street School from 2:30 P.M., daily, five days per week and an adult program from 7:00 P.M. to 9:00 P.M..

Several adult and children's organizations, in addition to the public sector, have used this facility. This department has assisted these organizations, most notably, the Rhode Island Paraplegia Association and (PARI) Rhode Runners, with a variety of fund raisers. Thousands of dollars have been raised for PARI to be used for wheelchairs, basketball (wheelchair) games, equipment, etc. This department has also been instrumental in securing the facilities at Brown University, for PARI, to conduct the N.E. Wheelchair Games.

This program, for the first time in the history of this city, provides equal recreational opportunity for the handicapped. Several cities surrounding Providence are currently interested in using this facility, on a per capita cost basis, for the 1979-'80 academic year.





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### Bussing

In 1975 this department had one bus. At that time and for the previous seven years, this bus was used to take the youngsters to camp and return -- 8 trips!

In '75 two busses were "found" in the city garage -- dirty, pounds of dust and almost forgotten. At one time these buses were owned by Model Cities. Within days they became the property of this department. The three buses were cleaned, washed and painted and attractive blue. These buses have individually travelled in excess of 70,000 miles in less than three years. In many instances the trips provided by this department are the only pleasurable experiences many city residents have ever had in the way of city sponsored transportation. This is especially true of the senior citizens.

Funds are being requested from the Mayor's Office of Community Development to replace these busses in the not too distant future. This department is constantly searching for government surplus busses. Hopefully some can be found to allay the pressing demands made of this department by all segments of the city population, for transportation.

In time there is every indication the city will need a department of transportation.



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### Summer Food Service Program for Children

Prior to 1977 the Summer Food Service Program for Children, sponsored by the U.S. Department of Agriculture, was a very minor segment of the overall recreational effort of this department. The procedure for several years prior to the summer of 1977 was to award the lunch contract to the low bidding caterer. The award was always in the vicinity of twenty-five thousand dollars for an eight week period that consisted of 750 lunches per day, five days per week and distributed at the seven city owned swimming pools. The caterer had to adhere to rigid federal guidelines.

In 1977 the administration agreed to change this procedure and with the aide of the social director of the Providence Public Housing Authority, several department heads and staff from this department formulated a program whereby 22 senior citizens made the lunches at Central High School (now the lunches are made at the new Samuel Bridgham Middle School). Both the hiring of the senior citizens and the use of a city-owned school were noted by the U.S. Department of Agriculture in a half hour film that was shown to all the state food directors of the United States at the annual, Santa Fe, New Mexico meeting of 1977. This department has received a great deal of publicity on this novel and innovative program.

A comparison graphically indicates the phenomenal growth of this program:

	<u>1974</u>	<u>1978</u>
Cost (8 weeks)           \$ (Paid for by U.S.D.A.)	25,000	135,000
Number of Children Served (5 days per/wk)	750	4,300 (7 days per/wk)
Number of Sites	7	43
Number Employed	(Caterer)	22 Seniors 11 "Other"

Projected cost, 1979, will be in excess of \$200,000



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**Conclusion**

Recreation in the City of Providence is in a state of flux. It would seem that the population level will remain stable for the foreseeable future. Statistics indicate growing numbers of people above the age of fifty-five and a decreasing number of births. This fact has already had an effect on the Providence School Department. However, public recreation exists to serve all of the populace. This will mean a redistribution of effort and funds. Already this department has placed emphasis on senior citizen programs. The not too distant future will dictate further consideration for large segments of the city population.