

Aquatic center aims to expand hours, programs through hiring

Written by By Cody Begaye Sun Correspondent
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Innovative ways to increase staff

Members of the Gallup Aquatic Center Board discussed their program calendar for the upcoming months as well as their goals for staffing, as part of their regular meeting Nov. 1 at the Gallup-McKinley County Schools Central Office.

Michelle Burrola, recreation manager for the City of Gallup, said they have seen a decline in employees at Gallup Aquatic Center in recent months primarily due to two things: lack of a certified lifeguard trainer; and loss of previously certified youth employees, many of whom left for college or other jobs.

Burrola says the aquatic center wants to increase employment of local youth.

“What we would like to do is to have the [district] publicize the information and see if we can get our young employment going again,” Burrola said. “And hopefully bring up the revenue again.”

Seven part-time positions were not filled in the past several months because applicants lacked the proper certification, she pointed out.

“We’ll happily publicize anything for the [recreation] centers we have,” Assistant Superintendent of Business Services for GMCS Jvanna Hanks said.

Burrola said the hiring has been slow this year for the first time since 2000.

While the option to hire a trainer from Albuquerque is available, Burrola said they will not be able to come to Gallup and help with certification training unless there are at least 10 applicants to train.

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“We also have to take into consideration the [local] students and adults. Sometimes we don’t get them to apply for the positions,” she added.

Hanks suggested using student interns for the positions. She pointed out that some of the district’s College and Career Readiness students who want to enter the medical field, will need and benefit from CPR and resuscitation training - the same training required to become a lifeguard.

“On the weekends and evenings, they could fill in,” Hanks said. “We’ve got a lot of intelligent young men and women in our district.”

Using student interns to fill the positions could create a continuous stream of trained lifeguards if they are able to offer this opportunity to the College and Career Readiness students, Hanks added.

Burrola said she handles CPR and first aid training for the aquatic center. She added once their current lifeguard receives certification in January, they will be able to train lifeguards in-house again.

Hanks said she would pass the idea onto the College and Career Readiness director, because she thinks this program could potentially benefit multiple parties.

“It’s definitely not a talk, we are walking the walk,” Hanks said. “We’ve got students district-wide in career pathways at every single one of our high schools now.”

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