

Partnership Improves Accessibility and Energy Efficiency at Hodgins-Berardo Recreation Center

Collaboration between several entities helped the Greenway Joint Recreation Association (GJRA) complete a major entrance doors upgrade at Hodgins-Berardo Recreation Center in Coleraine, located in Itasca County. Built in 1962, the recreation center is a historic community asset serving residents and visitors from across the region. Installed in the 1980s, the entrance doors had become difficult to use, poorly insulated, and inaccessible to some users.

GJRA Facilities Director Ken Gernander led the project. CEDA Region 5 team member Lisa Randall supported his efforts by assisting with grant applications, budget coordination and grant reports for the \$46,145 project. The improvements were fully grant funded with support from the Blandin Foundation, the Business Energy Retrofit program funded by Iron Range Resources & Rehabilitation (IRRR) and administered by Arrowhead Economic Opportunity Agency, and an IRRR Culture & Tourism Grant.

The new ADA-accessible entrance provides safer, more independent access for people using mobility devices, older adults, and families with young children. Improved insulation and sealing will also reduce heat loss, energy use, and maintenance costs during northern Minnesota winters. While Hodgins-Berardo Recreation Center is well known for hockey and figure skating.

GJRA's impact extends far beyond ice sports. The association coordinates youth recreation throughout ISD 316, supporting football, baseball, and fast-pitch softball at nearby Jen Guyer Fields, along with camps, practices, tournaments, and other community activities. The facility also includes a community fitness center and rentable meeting space, making it a year-round resource for residents. GJRA works closely with and supports organizations including the Emerald Ice Skating Club, Greenway Amateur Hockey Association, Mount Itasca, Sertich Hockey Camps, and Camp Hiawatha. These partnerships provide recreational and developmental opportunities for young people throughout the Greenway area. As one of Minnesota's few remaining recreation taxing districts, GJRA serves 11 government entities throughout the Greenway School District.

The completed entrance reflects GJRA's leadership, Ken Gernander's work, CEDA's grant assistance, and the commitment of regional funding partners to preserving an important community facility.