

## News Release

For Immediate Release

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### **Youth Sport Referees Needed in Fredericksburg Now: Referee Shortage Threatens Youth Sports Offerings**

**(Fredericksburg, VA) June 9, 2022** – The City of Fredericksburg Department of Parks, Recreation and Events offers recreation leagues designed to introduce children to the games of soccer, field hockey, baseball and basketball. Designed to be less competitive, affordable and accessible for all children, the recreation leagues are an ideal setting for instilling a love of the game and a healthier lifestyle that can last a lifetime.

A growing shortage of referees is impacting these recreation leagues, and the City is in need of more sports officials to referee in every sport. “Consider getting involved in your local sports programs, as a proactive parent, as a volunteer coach, or as a paid sports officiate – they are all equally important as positive role models for a great youth sports experience,” stated Todd Brown, Director of Fredericksburg Parks, Recreation and Events.

And as athletic leagues have resumed in recent months, the availability of sports officials have not resumed at the same level. A recent article published by National Federation of State High School Associations (NFHS) states that 50,000 individuals discontinued their service as high school officials since the 2018-2019 season. Virginia is experiencing more than a 50% decrease in officials since that time.

This decline in officials has directly impacted the City of Fredericksburg’s recreation leagues. For example, the spring 2022 soccer season lacked officials for nearly 2/3 of the games. In order to keep the season running, City staff worked with Commonwealth Cardinals FC and James Monroe High School’s boys’ varsity team who were able to provide players to officiate the youth games.

While there may be many reasons sports officials have not returned to refereeing since the pandemic, the most significant of these stated factors are 1) the amount of pay received per game officiated and 2) the behavior of players and their families. “Together we can improve the culture of sports in our community. With your help officiating, coaching and positive parenting, the City’s local recreation leagues can continue to make a difference in the lives of so many children,” said Jillian Franklin, Superintendent of Sports and Fitness.

If you have a love of the game and are interested in learning to officiate sports, while earning some income, consider becoming a sports official. You can find your local sports official association contact information for baseball, basketball, cheer, field hockey, football, gymnastics, lacrosse, soccer, softball,



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volleyball, and wrestling at:

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1m3ybUDNZ4TyvHZbiKkcSkfB3Fom2IJLR/view>.

For more information on the Fredericksburg Parks, Recreation and Events' sports division, please contact Jillian Franklin at 540-372-1086 or [jlfranklin@fredericksburgva.gov](mailto:jlfranklin@fredericksburgva.gov).

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