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## **Improving recreational and cultural facilities and programs - by Joseph Solomon**

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Joseph Solomon,  
City of Warwick

During my tenure as mayor, my administration has worked to strengthen what was already a great working relationship with the Rhode Island Sports Commission and the Providence Warwick Convention and Visitors Bureau. With these partnerships, together with our efforts to improve our recreational and cultural facilities and programs, Warwick is rapidly becoming a favorite location for national, regional and local organizations' competitions and special events.

The end of October saw the arrival of the U.S. Quidditch Northeast Regional Championships to our community. Real-life Quidditch is one of the nation's fastest growing collegiate sports. Mimicking many elements of the sport from the famous Harry Potter books, Quidditch is a fast-paced, gender-integrated, full-contact sport, which presently boasts more than 170 official teams, 4,000 players, nine annual championship events and hundreds of thousands of fans.

The two-day event, which drew nearly two dozen teams and just shy of 400 athletes to our Bend St. athletic complex, attracted teams from Connecticut, Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New York, Rhode Island and Vermont. The event was conservatively estimated to result in 200 hotel rooms booked in Warwick.

The Quidditch championships came on the heels of the R.I. Sting Girls Hockey Tournament, spearheaded by Warwick native and Olympic gold and silver medalist Sara DeCosta-Hayes, which was held at various locations throughout the state, including Warwick. That weekend's event alone resulted in 842 hotel room nights and roughly \$1.1 million in direct spendings, with a large portion of that invested right here in our community.

And, in just a few months, we'll be welcoming the U.S. Synchronized Skating Championships, hosted by our own Warwick Figure Skaters, to Rhode Island. Practices will take place on their home ice, our Thayer and Warburton arenas. Some 3,000 athletes, fans and families will arrive, resulting in an estimated \$2.8 million direct impact on the state from this competition.

Warwick is also home each year to the annual Ocean State Grand National Karate Championships, which is slated to celebrate its 40th anniversary next spring. Over 4,000 competitors, spectators, coaches, vendors and officials arrive in town for the weekend, recently translating to more than 1,100 hotel rooms and roughly \$500,000 infused into the local economy.

Our city has great recreational facilities, a wide variety of world-class dining options, beautiful beaches, endless retail opportunities and 17 hotels offering great accommodations at a range of prices. All of that, together with our central location, convenient access to Rtes. 95 and 295, T.F. Green Airport and the InterLink intermodal commuter rail station, Warwick's a perfect choice to host your sporting events, business and civic organizations' conferences. I invite you to contact Karen Jedson, director of tourism, culture and development to learn more about all Warwick has to offer to ensure your event is successful and memorable.

Joseph Solomon is the mayor of Warwick

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