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2004
City of Minneapolis
Park and Recreation
Summer Youth
Report



Introduction

The Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board (MPRB) received funding through the Minnesota Youth Program (MYP) to operate youth employment and training programs during the summer of 2004. This report includes an overview of the program, results achieved, a profile of youth served and program costs.

Program Overview and Background

The Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board was founded in 1883 and is responsible for maintaining and developing the Minneapolis park system and providing recreational programs for the city's residents. This semiautonomous body manages a total of approximately 6,000 acres, indoor ice arenas, tennis centers, three outdoor pools and two water parks and slides.

Forty-four recreation centers are staffed year-round, including 30 neighborhood centers, nine community recreation centers with auditorium-gymnasiums and five neighborhood recreation shelters.

Over 1 million residents of all ages from all walks of life take advantage of more than 6,000 MPRB programs annually. These programs serve pre-schoolers to senior citizens, and special programs serve those with mental or physical disabilities. Various classes, crafts, games, cultural events, environmental programs and sports are available.



The Board believes it is of paramount importance to help young, unskilled youth make the connection between school and work. Providing opportunities for economically disadvantaged youth helps them evolve into productive and achieving members of the community.

MPRB operates Teen Teamworks, a summer employment program that has served more than 4,700 youth since its inception in 1986. This program offers quality park maintenance and recreation assistance, work experience and educational opportunities to unemployed or underemployed at-risk youth between the ages of 14 and 18. The primary reason for unemployment is not necessarily a shortage of available jobs, but a lack of basic skills and unrealistic expectations of what is required to succeed in the work world. Without appropriate intervention, this may translate to chronic unemployment or underemployment in adulthood.

Helping young teens acquire an appreciation for the connection between academic, social, judgment and job skills has been the ongoing focus for the Teen Teamworks project.

Community Needs

The MPRB has identified changing social and economic needs as a primary reason for an expanded summer employment and training program. Recent trends in Minnesota have had a significant impact on families with children. These social and economic changes have created a higher demand for a more diverse community-based program that responds to the unmet needs of neighborhood families. Minneapolis children who live in highly stressed, disorganized family environments are faced with multiple risk factors, which can combine to place youth in jeopardy of a lifetime of restricted opportunities. Many Minneapolis youth are rapidly heading for adulthood poorly prepared both academically and emotionally. Projections indicate that many of these youth will be unable to hold jobs due to a lack of fundamental literacy skills and work habits.

Minneapolis is becoming more culturally and economically diverse. Each neighborhood is unique and reflects both the positive and negative changes experienced by other major metropolitan areas over the past decade. The increase in poverty, alcohol and other chemical abuse, teen pregnancy, gang activity, serious juvenile crime, and school dropout rates underscore the need for youth employment and training programs.

Program Activities and Services

“Teen Teamworks/Earn While You Learn” offers Minneapolis youth the opportunity to earn money and learn appropriate work maturity skills through a combination of work experience and academic enrichment. There are essentially three components to the program: daily participation on a work crew; weekly classroom sessions; and voluntary recreational opportunities on a biweekly basis.

Employment and Recreational Opportunities

The majority of youth work on crews performing basic ground maintenance in the city's parks. Youth on these crews spend most of their hours removing trash, raking sand lots, pulling weeds, spreading wood chips, edging paths, and other routine or special maintenance tasks.

A crew of eight to ten youth and one supervisor are assigned to perform daily and special maintenance chores at each park. Youth work nine seven-hour days in two-week pay period, with the tenth day (payday) designated as a voluntary recreation day.

The Individual Placement component placed 18 youth one-on-one with a full-time MPRB staff member. The volunteer mentors came from all divisions of the MPRB. The work tasks youth completed proved to be very rewarding experiences for the teens. These special assignments included:

Maintenance Division

Working in the field under the direct supervision of park keepers and crew leaders provided positive job opportunities for teens. Participants worked at different Park Centers or on routes helping to provide the basic cleaning and ground maintenance. Teaching youth how to operate power equipment safely and to ensure parks were secure for park users was a high priority. Other experiences included setting up, marking and maintaining of football, soccer, softball and baseball fields. Youth also received training for the appropriate procedures for the cleaning and water treatment of wading pools.

Recreation Division

Youth assigned to work with Building and Center Directors gained a variety of job experiences. Youthworkers were responsible for monitoring the safety of small children using the wading pools, tot lots and other park facilities. Teens helped schedule the use of park equipment and rooms, answered phones and established a positive relationship with park users and other staff. Teens also planned and organized their own group activities such as craft projects or sport events. Teens developed important leadership skills and had the opportunity to become mentors themselves.

Human Resources-Administration Division

One youth assigned to the downtown office was a valuable asset to personnel in this division. This youth learned to run the switchboard, work on the computer, file and type. He also gained communication and organizational skills, as well as a great sense of self-esteem and self-confidence.

Finance Division

One youth worker, working with staff in the Finance Department was exposed to a variety of job assignments. This participant helped maintain various financial, payroll, and accounting records; distributed financial information; processed on-line expenditure/revenue transactions. This participant also learned valuable computer skills, such as how to use spreadsheet and word processing applications, and assisted in preparing financial reports and maintaining inventory records.

Environmental Operations Services

Eight youth were given the opportunity to work as team with the Environmental Services Staff two days a week. These youth learned how invasive plant species were introduced to the area and how to recognize and remove them. This team also helped to plant hundreds of trees and native wildflowers in our woodlands, prairies and wetlands.

Success Story: Shawn Hockett

Shawn Hockett could be a poster boy for the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board (MPRB) Teen Teamworks Program. In 1988, he was 14-years-old and living in a single-parent home. Shawn was getting into trouble and needed something to occupy his time. To help out, his aunt and uncle brought him into their home and enrolled him in the Teen Teamworks Program. Teen Teamworks was the answer.

One the most challenging aspects of Shawn's job was learning to get along other people including his brother in a work setting, and still focus on the tasks at hand. He learned about teamwork and how to deal with authority. Shawn felt that his supervisor's daily guidance provided him with the skills and confidence to be able to advance within the Minneapolis Park & Recreation Board. Shawn stated, "I was treated as an individual that made work fun." The educational component of the "Earn While You Learn" program gave him the knowledge and information necessary to make positive choices in life and school. When asked what the MPRB Teen Teamworks Program meant to him, he said, "It was my foundation for who I am and what I have become."

Shawn worked for the MPRB Teen Teamworks program for five summers. When Shawn was 18, he graduated from high school and continued to work with the MPRB in a seasonal position. When asked why he chose this career path, he replied that "it suited his personality" and "I knew it was a goal that I could attain." He was employed as a seasonal park keeper trainee for five years and then was able to move into a full-time park keeper position for another seven years. In 1999, he was presented with the opportunity to work as a crew leader for the MPRB Teen Teamworks Program. That opportunity gave him the confidence to be selected for a full-time crewleader position, which he started this past summer.

Throughout his career with the MPRB, Shawn's involvement with the Teen Teamworks Program has grown. He has assisted site supervisors and provided guidance to youth working in the program. His own experience as a participant in the program has earned him respect among his colleagues and the youth he works with.



For Additional Information on the Earn While You Learn/Teen Teamworks Program, contact:

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Academic Enrichment

All youth participate in the academic enrichment component of the Teen Teamwork project, which focuses on three areas: basic skills development in reading, writing and math, exploration of personal and social issues facing today's youth (for example: teen parenting, family violence and substance abuse), and integration of classroom topics with work experience on the various crews (for example: teamwork, job seeking and keeping skills and filling out job applications).

These sessions introduced relevant topics to the participants and encouraged them to practice their reading, writing, math, and critical thinking skills. Supervisors and youth workers felt the educational sessions were beneficial because they got some helpful tips on how to communicate better with people and how to get and hold jobs. The educational sessions also helped youth learn and practice job and social skills such as listening, communicating, contributing to group activities and understanding and meeting expectations.

Topics were selected on the basis of comments from participants in previous years, as well as formal and informal assessment of Minneapolis students and teachers during the school year.

Using a variety of interactive teaching techniques, including panel discussions and field trips, educational staff help the youth learn about appropriate work attitudes and behavior, sexual harassment, educational options, career exploration, decision-making and conflict resolution skills, teen parenting, and violence and family issues.

Having licensed teachers in 2004, allowed youth going into grades 10, 11 and 12 to earn elective credits for academic and community service. Having these credits to put toward high school graduation was extremely valuable to the participants.

Profile of Youth Served

Youth workers ranged in age from 14 to 18. However, 83 percent were 14 or 15 years old. The majority (61 percent) of all youthworkers were male. Research has consistently demonstrated that there is a higher correlation of "at risk" youth among adolescent males, especially young males of color.

An overview of 2004 youth worker statistics is represented on the next page.



YOUTH SERVED.....	124
Male.....	76 (61%)
Female.....	48 (39%)
14 - 15 years of age.....	104 (83%)
16 - 18 years of age.....	20 (17%)
Black.....	90 (72%)
White.....	6 (5%)
American Indian.....	6 (5%)
Hispanic.....	3 (1%)
Asian.....	17 (14%)
Somalian.....	2 (1%)

Outcomes

All staff, worksite supervisors and educational staff in Teen Teamworks demonstrate an ethic of service to the youth. There is a real sense of caring and commitment. Supervisors and educators are highly conscious of the fact that, for many of the youth, they may well be the only positive adult role model. They routinely go above and beyond their job responsibilities in their efforts to help these youth.

The program is also making real strides at building a sense of community in the city's neighborhoods. Youth are performing a much-needed community service in their "home" parks, which is appreciated by neighborhood residents. Youth are also learning to value and respect the city's natural resources, as well as work with peers from their neighborhoods to achieve common goals.

Program Costs/Funding Sources

The cost per participant (including the educational curriculum development and leadership) was \$3,000 per participant.

Public Funding Sources:

Minnesota Dept of Employment & Economic Development.....	\$183,000
Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board.....	\$154,000
General Mills Foundation.....	\$15,000
City of Minneapolis-CDBG Funds.....	\$15,000
Toro Foundation.....	\$ 5,000
Total Funding from Public and Private Sources.....	\$372,000