



**2003  
CITY OF MINNEAPOLIS  
PARK & 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 2003. 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 slide facilities.

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 these 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 4,500 youth since its inception in 1986. This program offers positive 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.

Crews 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 a typical two-week pay period, with the tenth day (payday) designated as a voluntary recreation day.

The Individual Placement component to the Teen Teamwork program was again such a success that this year we were able to place 10 youth one on one with a full-time MPRB staff member. These 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 another positive job opportunity for teens. Youth worked at different Park Centers or on routes helping to provide 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. Youth workers 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 establish 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.

### **Environmental Operations Services**

Eight youth were given the opportunity to work as a 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 plant hundreds of trees and native wildflowers in city woodlands, prairies and wetlands.

### **Finance Division**

One youth had the opportunity to work alongside staff in the finance department and were exposed to a variety of job assignments. She helped maintain various financial/payroll/accounting records; distribute financial information; process on-line expenditure/revenue transactions; operate computer spreadsheet/word processing applications; assisted in preparing financial reports and helped maintain inventory records.



## ACADEMIC ENRICHMENT

In addition to these work experiences, all youth also 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 retention 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 participants 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 more successfully. 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 helped 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 the certified teachers in 2003 allowed 110 youth to earn up to three elective credits, one for academics and two for community service. Having these credits to put toward high school graduation meant a lot to the youth.



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## PROFILE OF YOUTH SERVED

TEEN TEAMWORKS 2003 workers ranged in age from 14 to 18. However, 66 percent were 14 or 15 years old. The majority (68 percent) of all participants 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 2003 participant statistics is represented below:

<b>Youth Hired in 2003:</b>	<b>110</b>	
Male	75	68%
Female	35	32%
14-15 Years Old	66	60%
16-18 Years Old	44	40%
Black	78	70%
White	5	5%
American Indian	2	2%
Asian	16	15%
Somalian	7	6%

## OUTCOMES

All staff, worksite supervisors and educational staff in the Teen Teamworks program 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 each of the city’s neighborhoods. Youth are performing a much-needed community service in their “home” parks, which is appreciated by neighborhood residents. At the same time, they are also learning to value and respect the city’s natural resources as well as work with their peers from their neighborhoods to achieve common goals.

**PROGRAM COSTS/FUNDING SOURCES**

The program cost per participant (including the educational curriculum development and leadership was \$2,684 per participant.

**PUBLIC FUNDING SOURCES:**

Minnesota Department of Employment & Economic Development: .....	\$183,000
Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board:.....	\$50,000
General Mills Foundation: .....	\$15,000
Central Neighborhood Improvement Association: .....	\$44,500
<b>Total Funding: .....</b>	<b>\$292,500</b>

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