

FINAL REPORT

AUG 13 2001

1999 Project Abstract

For the Period Ending June 30, 2001

TITLE: EE30 Youth Outdoor Environmental Education Program

PROJECT MANAGER: Stephanie LeGros

ORGANIZATION: Dakota County Parks

ADDRESS: 8500 127th Street East, Hastings, MN 55033

WEB SITE ADDRESS: www.co.dakota.mn.us/parks

FUND: Future Resources Fund

LEGAL CITATION: ML 1999, Ch. 231, Sec. 16, Subd. 011(i)

APPROPRIATION AMOUNT: \$125,000

Overall Project Outcome and Results

The key objective of the program was to develop an outdoor education program for youth-at-risk in Dakota County. The program built an extensive team challenge/ropes course which included a high ropes course, low ropes course, low initiatives, and a climbing wall. The following percentages display the primary participants in the program: alternative schools (34%); Community Corrections (30%); park and recreation groups (13%); schools/peer mentor programs (8.2%); Social Services (6.7%); staff training (6%); and treatment programs (1.8%). There was a total of 1,282 youth served. Many of those youth were part of on-going programs. The total number of contact hours with youth was 3,240 hours. The contact hours are derived by multiplying the number of youth involved during each program and the length of time of the program.

The outdoor education program for youth-at-risk gave youth in Dakota County a unique opportunity that they would never had without this program. The program gave youth a safe, fun, adventurous outdoor experience in a Dakota County Park setting. Through these experiences participants learned to work cooperatively as a group, trust team members and self, develop effective group interaction skills, and gain a greater appreciation and awareness of the environment.

Project Results Use and Dissemination

Twenty-two partnerships were created during the program period. Fifteen staff were trained in adventure learning activities. Presentations were made at conferences, Dakota County advisory meetings, and in local communities.

AUG 13 2001

Date of Report: July 1, 2001
LCMR Final Work Program Report

I. PROJECT TITLE: EE30 Youth Outdoor Environmental Education Program

Project Manager: Stephanie Le Gros
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Total Biennial Project Budget:

\$LCMR:	\$125,000
\$Match:	\$0
-\$LCMR Amount Spent:	\$116,617
=\$LCMR Balance:	\$8,383

Legal Citation: ML 99, Ch. 231, Sec. 16, Subd. ~~01(ii)~~ 11(i).
EE30 Youth Outdoor Environmental Education Program

Appropriation Language:

\$125,000 is from the future resources fund to the commissioner of natural resources for an agreement with Dakota County to develop youth-at-risk environmental education programs.

II. and III. FINAL PROJECT SUMMARY:

Overall Project Outcome and Results

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IV: OUTLINE OF PROJECT RESULTS:

Result 1: Develop and implement a Youth-at-Risk Program in Dakota County Parks.

An Adventure Learning Specialist was hired and developed and implemented the Youth-at-Risk Program from November 1999 through May 2001.

Result 1:	LCMR Budget:	\$74,462
	Balance:	\$5,595

The remaining balance is due to the adventure learning specialist resigning from the position in May 2001 for another position. A small portion of the staff dollars was unused because the staff left one and half months before the grant period ended.

Significance: This program would not be possible without full-time staff to develop and implement the program. In hindsight, additional dollars for more staff would have provided more programs to youth-at-risk and provide a back up for staff.

Result 2: Provide outdoor environmental education equipment and materials that would enhance the Youth-at-Risk Program.

Backpacks, Duluth Packs, sleeping bags, sleeping pads, cooking equipment and other related items for camping/canoeing have been purchased. Ropes, harnesses, and other related items have been purchased for rock climbing. Informational books and guides have been purchased for use with the program.

Result 2:	LCMR Budget:	\$12,538
	Balance:	\$46

Significance: The equipment that was purchased provided valuable camping and rock climbing experiences for participants. Most participants experienced these activities for the first time. The equipment gave the participants an opportunity to learn about the natural environment.

Result 3: Design and develop a team challenge/ropes course focused on building skills in trust, communication, team building, and leadership.

A dynamic team challenge/ropes course was completed on May 15, 2000. Numerous youth groups from grant partners cleared brush and helped prepare the ropes course site for construction. A climbing wall was completed in June 2001.

Result 3:	LCMR Budget:	\$35,000
	Balance:	\$1,027

Significance: The team challenge/ropes course was where all the magic happened. These courses are a pivotal tool for learning. It was through experiences on the course that participants were challenged and stretched to grow. Participants increased their self-esteem, built trust, developed leadership skills, and improved teamwork and communication skills.

Result 4: Market and promote Youth-at-Risk Program.

The program coordinator contacted and met with potential users of the program. Meetings were held with all of the partners identified in this Work Program under Section VII. Cooperation.

An informational seminar on the **Youth-at-Risk Program** was presented at the Minnesota Association of Alternative Programs State Conference on February 18, 2000.

Informational meetings were held with various organizations including: Dakota County Social Workers, Rosemount Family Resource Center, Vale Education Center, Farmington Area Learning Center, Simley High School Alternative School, Check and Connect Program (an outreach program by the U of M for students within Dakota County), and Dakota County Extension Service.

A promotional brochure was developed and printed by Dakota County Parks Department to provide information about the mission and objectives of the **Youth-at-Risk Program**. Articles have appeared in the Dakota County Update, a citizen newsletter and local newspapers.

Result 4:	LCMR Budget:	\$0
	Balance:	\$0

Significance: Marketing and promoting the program was key in order to reach the audiences of this grant.

Result 5: Conduct program for 1,000 youth involved in programs for youth-at-risk and underserved youth throughout Dakota County.

There was a total of 1,282 youth served. Many of those youth were part of on-going programs. The total number of contact hours with youth was 3,240 hours. The contact hours are derived by multiplying the number of youth involved during each program and the length of time of the program. The following percentages display the primary participants in the program: alternative schools (34%); Community Corrections (30%); park and recreation groups (13%); schools/peer

mentor programs (8.2%); Social Services (6.7%); staff training (6%); and treatment programs (1.8%).

The youth served were from program with Dakota County Corrections Department, School District 196 Area Learning Center, Eagan Park and Recreation Department, Burnsville Park and Recreation Department, Regions Hospital Chemical Dependency Program, School District 917 IDEA program, Dakota County Social Services Transition and Truancy Programs, Simley High School Area Learning Center, District 196 Community Education, Hastings High School Peer Mentorship Program, Rosemount High School Conflict Mediation Program, Work Experience Programs from Eagan, Apple Valley and Rosemount High Schools and the Dakota County Extension Service. Most of the groups listed above have indicated an interest in continuing to use the Youth-at-Risk Program to serve their students.

Most programs were evaluated to determine effectiveness and satisfaction from participants.

Result 5:	LCMR Budget:	\$3,000
	Balance:	\$1,715

The remaining balance is due to the heavy users of the program had their own transportation. As a result, the need for transportation was less than anticipated.

Significance: A high number of youth-at-risk were part of this program. This allowed a great number of youth to be part of a potentially a life-changing experience and offered youth the types of experiences and skills needed to help them make positive choices in their lives benefiting themselves, the community, and the environment

V. DISSEMINATION:

Information and plans for the Youth Outdoor Environmental Education Program were disseminated through key county and city resources. Informational and promotional articles were included in county and city publications highlighting the uniqueness of this model project. Presentations were made at conferences, county advisory meetings, and in local communities.

VI. CONTEXT

A. Significance:

Outdoor environmental education programming in Dakota County offered youth the types of experiences and skills needed to help them make positive choices in their lives benefiting themselves, the community, and the environment. A **Youth Outdoor Environmental Education Program** is a positive approach Dakota County can take to build self-esteem in youth, teach skills to empower youth, and develop relationships that leads to cooperation and trust. These assets build a strong youth community in Dakota County and prevent youth from making negative choices.

Nationwide, levels of juvenile crime have increased during the last decade. Since 1990, there has been a 190% increase in the number of juveniles prosecuted for crime in Dakota County. In addition, the population of Dakota County continues to grow. By the year 2020 the population will increase by 140,000. Even if juvenile arrest rates do not continue to increase as they have in the past decade, the overall number of juvenile crimes committed will likely be dramatically higher in the next twenty years due to population growth.

Nationwide studies prove that youth programs help youth make constructive use of their time. In Kansas City, Missouri, there was a 25% decrease in juvenile apprehensions compared to the previous year in areas where youth programming was offered. Youth programs have not only reduced risky behavior, but also increased positive outcomes for youth. Studies have determined that healthy development can help youth grow up healthy, caring and responsible. Programming targeted at youth-at-risk will provide these personal assets for gaining a positive self-identity and interpersonal skills. This program will also teach skills that will be transferred into real life situations. The Dakota County Corrections Department has identified skill building as a critical factor leading to behavior change.

Teaching youth about the environment increased their awareness of the interdependency of people and their natural surroundings. When awareness is raised, it leads toward a sense of stewardship. This fulfilled one of the goals of the Greenprint Statewide Plan for Environmental Education: to provide experiences to assist citizens (pupils) to increase their sensitivity and stewardship for the environment. The statewide plan has identified youth groups as a priority audience. The **Youth Outdoor Environmental Education Program** was an opportunity to develop ecologically minded citizens that will have a positive influence in the future toward a sustainable environment.

B. Time:

The proposed project was completed by June 30, 2001.

C. Budget Context: Dakota County has not previously requested LCMR funding for this project.

1.

BUDGET:

Personnel	\$73,462 Program Coordinator \$1000 Contracted Professionals
Equipment	\$12,538 Outdoor recreation equipment
Acquisition	Not Applicable
Development	\$35,000 Develop a team challenge/ropes course

Other	\$3000 Conduct programs
TOTAL	\$125,000

VII. COOPERATION:

Youth Outdoor Environmental Education Program partners include:

Laura Webber	Dakota County Community Corrections
Mary Montagne	Dakota County Public Health
Bill Bird	City of Apple Valley
Eric Billiet	City of Burnsville
Loudi Rivamonte	City of Eagan
Dave Schmidt	ISD 196 Alternative Learning Center
Rick Green	ISD 917 Special Education Programs
Eric Lancrete	Southwest Area YMCA

Numerous other programs participated in the program including: Dakota County Extension; Dakota County Social Services truancy and transition programs, Rosemount Community Education, Lakeville Community Education, Rosemount High School, Dakota Prairie Alternative Learning Center, Regions Hospital, Dakota Ridge School, Apple Valley High School, Hastings High School, and Simley High School Alternative Learning Center.

VII. LOCATION:

Youth Outdoor Environmental Education Programs took place in Dakota County Parks and offered to youth throughout Dakota County.