

INTRODUCTION

The Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board received funding through the Minnesota Youth Program (MYP) to operate a youth employment and training program during the summer of 1995. This report provides an overview of the program, the results achieved, a statistical profile of the young people served, and program costs.

PROGRAM OVERVIEW

BACKGROUND

The Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board (MPRB) was founded in 1883. The semi-autonomous body is responsible for maintaining and developing the Minneapolis park system and providing recreational programs. Minneapolis parks total 6,000 acres. There are about 170 park properties including 60 playgrounds, six municipal golf courses, gardens, picnic areas, indoor ice arenas, tennis centers, and three outdoor pools.

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

More than 6,000 programs are offered for the approximately 1,000,000 people who participate in events for all age groups: pre-school to senior citizen, male and female and special programs for persons with mental and physical disabilities. Various classes, crafts, games, cultural events, environmental programs and sports are available.

Connecting young, unskilled youth to the school and work arenas so they have an opportunity to evolve into productive and achieving members of the community has been of paramount importance to the MPRB.

MPRB operates Teen Teamworks, a summer employment program that has employed over 2,000 youth since 1986. This program offers a positive park maintenance and recreation assistance, work experience and educational sessions to unemployed or underemployed at-risk youth between the ages of 14 and 18. The primary reason for the unemployment among these youth is not a shortage of available jobs, but a lack of basic skills and unrealistic expectations of what is required to succeed in the work world.

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

COMMUNITY NEEDS

The MPRB identified changing economic and social needs for an expanded summer youth employment and training program. Recent trends in Minneapolis have had a significant impact of families with children. These social and economic changes have created a higher demand for a more diverse community-based program that responds to unmet needs of neighborhood families. Minneapolis children who live in highly stressed, disorganized family environments are faced with multi-risk factors on a daily basis 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 these youth will not be able to hold jobs because they lack fundamental literacy skills and work habits. The relationship between dropping out of school in adolescence and chronic unemployment

or underemployment as adults is not primarily from a shortage of available jobs, but from a significant deficiency in the work skills and attitudes expected of them in the work place.

Minneapolis is becoming more culturally and economically diverse. The many different neighborhoods reflect both the positive and negative changes experienced by other major metropolitan areas in the last decade. The increase in poverty, alcohol and other drug abuse, teen pregnancy, gang activity, serious juvenile crime, and school dropout rates underscores the need for youth employment and training programs.

Minnesota statistics include the following:

- 17 percent of youth are school dropouts. (source: 1990-91 Minnesota Department of Education)
- 17.4 percent of teenage girls become pregnant. (source: 1990 Minnesota Department of Health)
- 12.4 percent of children are living in households with incomes below the federal government poverty guidelines. (source: 1990 US Census Bureau)
- 42 percent of 12th grade youth use alcohol or illegal drugs at least monthly. (source: 1992 Minnesota Student Survey)
- 7.9 percent of youth are victims of neglect, physical, sexual or psychological abuse. (source: 1990 Minnesota Department of Human Services)
- 2.6 percent of youth have committed a violent or delinquent act. (source: 1990 Minnesota Department of Public Safety)

PROGRAM ACTIVITIES AND SERVICES

During the summer of 1995, the MPRB received funding under the Minnesota Youth Program to operate five TEEN TEAMWORKS program components: 1. Parks Maintenance, 2. Bike Patrol, 3. Nurture Nature Youth Mentoring Program, 4. Earn While You Learn Educational Program, and 5. Outdoor Supervision Program.

1. PARK MAINTENANCE

Youth were hired to complete park maintenance work at neighborhood park sites with an on-site adult supervisor in charge of a work crew consisting of 8 to 10 youth. Tasks completed by the work crews included: maintenance of the J.D. Rivers Children's Garden, spreading wood chips, cleaning up lake shore lines and swimming pool areas, edging park lawns and paths, serving as support staff at community events, and general maintenance of neighborhood parks. Youth were assigned to work in their own neighborhoods where they can see tangible results of the work on their neighborhood park every day and increases their connections to their communities.

2. BIKE PATROL

Youth worked with the Minneapolis Park Police to patrol parks and bike paths, provide information to bikers and other park users and help at neighborhood Bike Rodeos where children were taught bike safety.

3. EARN WHILE YOU LEARN EDUCATIONAL SESSIONS

All participants in the MPRB MYP summer youth employment program participated in weekly sessions which focused on the following issues:

- Positive Work Attitudes and Ethics
- Job Seeking and Keeping Skills
- Value of Staying in School
- Career Options
- Value of Money and Banking
- Independent Living Skills (shopping, cooking, nutrition)
- Conflict Resolution Skills

The sessions involved experiential learning, small group sharing, reading and reporting of articles related to the topics, math exercises, and structured role playing. These sessions were lead by staff from Lutheran Social Services, the MPRB Youthline Outreach Mentor Program and Tutorial Instructors hired to

integrate selected reading and math worksheets that relate to the subjects. Participants were paid an hourly wage for attending these sessions. Attendance was excellent.

4. NURTURE NATURE YOUTH MENTORING PROGRAM

Youth participating in this "Earth Ethic" initiative worked on the development of the new Cedar Lake Park including the following: erosion control, park bench repair and replacement, shore clean-up of concrete, asphalt and pipes, campsite restoration, park usage survey, trail redirection and repair, tree planting preparation, and glass, can, and general clean-up.

The program used an environmental education curriculum in which knowledgeable Community Mentors assisted the youth to understand the meaning of working with the natural resources in the park system. These mentors included naturalists, environmentalists, horticulturalists, craftspeople, hydrologists and landscapers. This component provided an intergenerational forum where youth and adults in the community address issues related to Nurturing Nature.

5. YOUTH OUTDOOR SUPERVISION PROGRAM

Youth monitored park pathways, tot lots, tennis courts, wading pools, and ballfields to answer question and supply information about park programs, model good park behavior, and report unwanted park behavior to appropriate staff. Youth received training on effective communication techniques, peer conflict resolution providing good customer service, and public speaking.

OUTCOMES

Youth participants accomplished the following :

- Completed projects in their neighborhood parks
- Earned money
- Developed positive relationships with adult role models and other youth
- Learned the value of teamwork
- Acquired landscaping, gardening, and recreation program skills
- Developed more initiative and independence
- Developed more responsibility and maturity
- Developed skills necessary for successful employment
- Developed an awareness of career options
- Developed an awareness of the importance of school success



The community benefitted in the following ways:

- Completion of needed park maintenance and recreation program work
- Youth were experienced as resources for neighborhood betterment
- Youth participated in positive rather than anti-social or illegal activities
- Increase respect for Park and Recreation facilities by youth
- Removal of graffiti from picnic tables, benches, buildings, tot lot equipment, tennis backboards, and baseball/softball player benches

PROGRAM COSTS/FUNDING SOURCES

Public Funding Sources:

Minnesota Youth Program.....	\$250,000
Minneapolis City Council/ CDBG	\$75,000
Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board	\$153,600

Private Foundation Funds:

Pillsbury Company Foundation.....	\$25,000
Dayton Hudson Foundation	\$20,000
General Mills Foundation	\$15,000

TOTAL REVENUE (Public and Private Sources): \$538,600

COST PER PARTICIPANT

The average state cost per participant for the 1995 Minnesota Youth Program operated by the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board was \$1,302.

STATISTICAL PROFILE OF YOUTH PARTICIPANTS

	Total	Percent
Total Enrollment	192	100
Male	123	64
Female	69	36

Age 14 to 15	122	64
Age 16 to 17	43	22
Age 18 to 21	27	14

African American	118	61
Asian American	21	11
Native American	10	5.5
Hispanic	4	2
White	39	20.5

Youth of Color	153	80
Youth With Disabilities	14	7
Public Assistance Recipients	169	88
Youth With Limited English Skills	9	5
Teen Parents	20	10
Juvenile Offenders	24	12.5
Foster Children	8	4
Students	151	79
Limited School Success	50	26
School Dropouts	10	5.5
Post-High School Students	31	16

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