

Parks and Recreation



The University of South Carolina's Institute for Public Service and Policy Research's **Organizational Performance Management Project** is an outgrowth of the South Carolina Municipal and County Benchmarking projects. The primary focus of the project is to provide training, technical assistance, research and publications designed to foster the application of results-based management in government organizations. One of the deliverables of the project is the *Best Practices Bulletin*. The goal of this new publication is to highlight innovative programs that are addressing service delivery challenges or community issues.

The information contained in this edition of the *Best Practices Bulletin* focuses on parks and recreation. Many of the programs included are ones recognized by the International City/County Management Association as innovative. South Carolina parks and recreation programs are also included. If your jurisdiction has found an innovative solution you would like to share, please contact Anna Berger or Bill Tomes. Please see contact information on the back of this bulletin.

Youth Programs

Parks and recreation programs offered for youth are more than traditional sport leagues and summer camps. The following information describes programs that help youth develop leadership, academic, and work skills, in addition to providing a traditional recreation outlet.

"Workreation" Program

Children and teens aged 8-17 can earn "rec bucks" in the city of Lafayette, Indiana (56,000), by spending an hour a day during the summer working at one of three aquatic facilities or a recreation center. The students perform such manual tasks as wiping down lounge chairs by the pool or picking up trash. They do not operate machinery or use chemicals. The students earn enough rec bucks in an hour to obtain free admission to one of the aquatic facilities.

Rec bucks can also be redeemed for snacks at recreation facility concession stands, amusement rides, and park-sponsored programs. The City also sells rec bucks in the form of gift certificates, and sends them to local social service agencies for distribution to at-risk children. Last year, in exchange for rec bucks, 160 youth did volunteer work under the supervision of a college student. Some "graduates" of the program have returned to work for the City.

For additional information, contact Ted Bumbleburg Interim Parks Superintendent, City of Lafayette, at (765) 807-1503, or e-mail at tbumbleburg@city.lafayette.in.us

Safety Classes

Teens living in Sterling Heights, Michigan (124,000), can take parks and recreation department classes in babysitting safety and in how to stay home alone safely. The classes are taught by a police officer and are offered quarterly. The babysitting class covers such issues as how to handle an accident or other emergency, what the teen should do if nervous about being alone at night, and other situations that babysitters may face. The home-alone class, which is open to children who are 9 to 14 years old, covers whether to open the door or answer the phone and how to respond to an emergency.

Parents are invited to stay for the 90-minute sessions. Each class can accommodate up to 30 students, and most are filled or almost filled. The classes are advertised through the City's quarterly newsletter, press releases to local newspapers, announcements on the local cable channel, and notices on the City's Web site.

Contact Debra Bozich, Recreation Coordinator, City of Sterling Heights, at (586) 446-2700, or at dbozich@sterling-heights.net

Youth Programs

Camp for Low Income

Children of low income families can go to summer camp for free in the City of Garland, Texas (216,000). The camp provides eight weeks of programming to 100 children, aged 6–12 years, with 50 slots each at two recreation centers. The children participate in such typical summer camp activities as picnics and swimming. Field trips, such as going to the zoo using public transportation, are a particular treat for these children, many of whom have never been on such trips. Registration takes place on a single day, and the camp typically has a waiting list. Parents must bring in their tax returns, proof of residency, a driver's license, and evidence of assistance received. City council approved \$20,000 from community block grant funds for the camp's first year, and has increased the camp's budget the next year to \$25,000, so that the children can participate in even more activities.

For additional information, contact Eric Valdez, Recreation Specialist, City of Garland, at (972) 205-3090 or at evaldez@ci.garland.tx.us

Joint City/School Recreation Program

The City of Fremont, California (203,400), and the Fremont Unified School District jointly offer after-school recreation programs at all five of the City's junior high schools. The City's recreation services division provides \$25,000 to each school, which hires its own teachers to offer a broad array of

after-school activities. Students participate free of charge in activities ranging from drama and foreign language instruction, to wrestling and cheerleading, to journalism and woodshop. All the programs also offer tutoring and homework assistance, as well as extended library hours.

Grades for participating students have risen, while absenteeism has dropped, especially on the days when programs are offered. Principals of all participating schools must make presentations to the city council and the school board four times a year. In addition to providing attractive recreation programming to young teens during the critical after-school hours, the program strengthens bonds between students and teachers.

Contact Ginny Duffie, Recreation Superintendent, City of Fremont, at (510) 494-4330 or at gduffy@ci.fremont.ca.us for additional information.



Miscellaneous

Vandalism Prevention in Parks

ParkWatch is a proactive campaign to combat vandalism in the parks in Glendale, Arizona (219,000). City parks had experienced high levels of serious vandalism, including graffiti, theft of playground equipment, and damage to park equipment. Since the program's inception in 2002, the City has presented information programs to school assemblies and classrooms, homeowners' associations, and special events. Whenever costly vandalism occurs in a park, the City notifies neighbors by distributing door hangers. Following each presentation or door hanger distribution, vandalism drops significantly in area parks for 30 to 60 days. In a recent six-month period, the City used 400 labor hours to combat vandalism, compared with 750 hours the previous year, and it spent \$27,000 compared with \$61,000. The ParkWatch campaign cost approximately \$4,000.

For additional information, contact Mike Gregory, Project Coordinator, City of Glendale, at (623) 930-2652, or at mgregory@ci.glendale.az.us

Fighting Youth Obesity

Youth obesity is quickly becoming an epidemic across the country. Combining exercise programs with nutrition classes is one way parks and recreation departments are addressing this issue. These healthy lifestyle programs for youth are currently being offered by the cities of Columbia, Florence, and North Augusta in South Carolina. To learn more about their efforts, please contact:

Jeff Rainwater, Parks and Recreation Department, City of Columbia at (803) 545-3086, or at jlrainwater@columbiasc.net

Chuck Pope, Parks and Recreation Director, City of Florence at (843) 665-3253, or at cpope@cityofflorence.com

Bob Brooks, Director of Parks, Recreation, and Leisure Services, City of North Augusta at (803) 441-4300, or at BBrooks@northaugusta.net

Outreach

Transportation is often an issue for youth participating in recreational programs. One strategy to overcome this barrier is to take programs and activities into the communities that are furthest from a recreational facility or park. This section highlights these types of mobile recreation programs.

The "Recreation at Your Door" (RAD) van program of the City of Fort Collins, Colorado (119,000), provides after-school and summer recreation programming to several low-income city neighborhoods. The van typically brings four high school and college student staff members, along with equipment, to provide games, art projects, and crafts for neighborhood children. The program's \$20,000 annual budget is subsidized by a local hospital, which provides staff who ride the van and offer the children lessons in nutrition and fitness. They also bring healthy snacks that the children often help prepare. During the school year, staff encourages the children to spend half an hour exercising (walking or jogging). Children who spend 1,200 minutes exercising earn a trip to Water World at the end of the year. The staff also set aside time to help the children with their homework. The van served 300 children last summer.



staff members and a trailer full of sports and recreation equipment, craft supplies, tables and chairs, and contest supplies and prizes. For four or five hours, neighborhood children participate in craft projects, group games, contests, and activities.

BRIM introduces children to different games and to the principles of sportsmanship. Additionally, BRIM team members serve as positive role models for participating children. The program's approximately \$125,000 annual budget is funded by the city council through the general fund. Demand for the program has been so high that a second BRIM van has been staffed and equipped.

For additional information, contact Rich Pierce, Director of Parks and Recreation, City of Bellflower, at (562) 804-1424 or at rpierce@bellflower.org

For additional information, contact Kristie Blackmon, Recreation Coordinator, City of Fort Collins, at (970) 416-2443 or at kblackmon@fcgov.com

The Bellflower Recreation in Motion (BRIM) program brings recreation equipment and programs to neighborhoods that are not near a Bellflower, California (72,878), park or playground. After a neighborhood watch captain or other resident obtains consent from neighbors and schedules a visit, BRIM staff block off the street and distribute flyers announcing a pending visit. On the scheduled day, a BRIM van brings a team of four

In South Carolina, the cities of Aiken and Rock Hill have similar programs. To learn more about their efforts, please contact:

Glenn Parker, Director of Parks and Recreation, City of Aiken at (803) 642-7632, or at gparker@aiken.net

Ed Thompson, Parks, Recreation, and Tourism Director, City of Rock Hill, (803) 329-5620, or at ETHompson@ci.rock-hill.sc.us

Technology

Parks Personal Digital Assistance Program

The City of Portage, Michigan, Parks Personal Digital Assistance (PDA) Program was nominated for the 2005 ICMA Annual Awards Program. In keeping with the City's mission of maintaining the high quality of parks, PDA was developed to speed up the process of identifying and remedying problems in Portage Parks by using new technology to compile reports and issue work orders promptly. Improved reporting capabilities

initiated by PDA has resulted in a considerable reduction in turn around time for issuing work orders and making necessary repairs in public areas of the city. Success of PDA has led the City to consider other applications of this type of technology in delivery of municipal services.

For additional information, contact William Deming, Director of Parks, Recreation and Property, City of Portage, at (269) 329-4522.



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To Learn More

For additional information on the Organizational Performance Management Project or the Local Government Service Delivery Forums, please contact:

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