

# **Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board**

## **Earn To Learn/Teen Teamworks**

### **2013 Annual Report**

#### **Introduction**

The Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board (MPRB) received additional funding through DEED, The City of Minneapolis and The General Mills Foundation, to operate its youth employment and training program during the summer of 2013. 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. The Minneapolis Park System consists of 182 park properties, including local and regional parks, playgrounds, golf courses, gardens, picnic areas, biking and walking paths, nature sanctuaries and the 55-mile Grand Rounds National Scenic Byway. Together, these properties total nearly 6,732 acres of land and water. The backbone of the park system is its 49 full-service neighborhood recreation centers.

The Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board annually serves nearly 400,000 citizens of Minneapolis. Approximately 18 million visits are made to the system each year, with an estimated five million visits to neighborhood parks. The Chain of Lakes draws over five million visits annually.

The Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board offers over 6,000 programs annually serving 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 8,750 youth since its inception in 1986. This program offers a variety of positive work and educational experiences to unemployed or underemployed at-risk youth throughout our park system involving our environmental, maintenance, horticulture, administration and recreation divisions. The majority of youth served are between the ages of 14 and 18, and with new DEED guidelines, we are able to offer employment to young people up to the age of 24. 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 program.

Teen Teamworks youth are referred to our program from Minneapolis Schools, the MN WorkForce Centers, Juvenile Justice Programs, YMCA, Boys and Girls Club, Minneapolis Employment and Training programs, Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board staff and other youth servicing agencies. Youth must live in Minneapolis, meet income guidelines, and or have additional barriers to employment (Examples are IEP's, English language learners, or pregnant or parenting teen).

### **Community Needs**

The MPRB has identified changing social and economic needs as a primary reason for an expanded summer employment and training program. 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 two main components to the program: daily participation on a work crew and weekly classroom sessions.

### **Employment Opportunities**

The majority of youth in the Teen Teamworks program work on crews of ten youth with adult supervisors. Youth are responsible for the aesthetics of their home and neighboring parks. They learn how to work together to complete their assigned tasks safely and in a timely manner. Crews work eight seven-hour days in the two-week pay period at the hourly pay rate of \$7.25.

As Teen Teamworks continues to expand its green initiatives, Park Board Environmental Education Staff provide special training to supervisors and youth to identify and remove invasive species; provide presentations on River/Stream water testing, the importance of storm drain maintenance and Stream erosion/pollution. Youth also participate in educational sessions on how to reduce waste and promote recycling in our parks.

There are special team assignments which included:

### **Environmental Operations Services - Green Team**

The Green Team is a conservation-based crew engaged in daily hands-on environmental work throughout the summer. The crew works in the natural areas of the Minneapolis park system, and mostly within the watershed of the Mississippi River. Typical work days include invasive species removal, weed wrenching, planting, watering, mulching, and citizen science work.

This summer youth learned how to catch and identify macro invertebrates in Webber Pond. They worked with entomologist Margot Monson, who taught them about the diversity of life found in fresh water. Throughout the summer, youth continued their participation in the Minnesota Odonata Survey Project. The project is a volunteer, citizen survey intended to determine the range and distribution of dragonfly species. Nine different parks were monitored this summer and many different kinds of dragonflies were found.

One of the education days consisted of sampling from area lakes in order to find Daphnia, a plankton species that a group of students at Augsburg College is studying. The students showed our youth their methods of identifying Daphnia and let the youth try it out for themselves. The team learned how to do plant identification with the help of Jenny Winkelman from the MWMO and the Newcomb's Wildflower Guide. Youth went to Fort Snelling State Park to go fishing with the help of naturalist Kao Thao where they learned about aquatic invasive species that are threatening our river and surrounding ecosystems.

### **Environmental Operations Services - Garden Crew**

The Garden Crew is based at JD Rivers Children's Garden. The Garden Crew propagated and planted a sharing garden and assisted younger children plant, weed, water, compost and harvest. They also prepare, sample and take home the garden produce, such as vegetables, herbs, and a little bit of fruit and flowers. Extra produce is donated to a local food shelf.

The Garden Crew also worked at Theodore Wirth Park. In the park they were responsible for keeping trails clean and intersections visible, weeding out perennial flowers and planting annual ones, removing invasive species and learning how to identify native ones too. In addition to learning through daily gardening activities, teens also focused a few hours each week on themed activities such as how to properly measure, graph and map their own garden map, and with the help of Community Bees on Bikes and the Minnesota Audubon Society they were fortunate to gain experience in honey-bee keeping, birdhouse building and local conservation. All admitted to liking the opportunity of spending the summer outdoors, but several also admitted to considering gardening much harder than they thought it would be. Regardless, all considered gardening as something they would continue in the future. The program had as positive of an effect on the teens as they did on the garden.

### **Park Pathways**

Teen Teamworks Park Pathways is a group of diverse, young teen leaders from different parts of Minneapolis. All have prior leadership experience, having participated in Village Parks, a collaborative program of MPRB and Concordia Language Villages that teaches High School students language and leadership skills. The Teen Teamworks Park Pathways program goal is to enrich the lives of youth who live in the Minneapolis area by creating and leading a diverse offering of summer opportunities. In the process they learn leadership skills, gain confidence and learn on the job skills, such as teamwork, planning, flexibility and problem solving.

The teen leaders serve as day camp counselors as well as incredible role models for the 7 to 14 year olds enrolled in these programs.

One of the programs, Language and Culture Camp, is a two week afternoon camp that blends drama, art, music and dance with language and cultural competencies. Youth from ages 7 - 12 attend the camp for 10 days, eager to participate and learn from the teens about the diverse linguistic and cultural mosaic of Minneapolis.

In the Waterways program, youth assist in Water Safety Clinics, providing support, encouragement and culturally enriching activities from park to lake and back again. In addition, many of these teen leaders serve as counselors in Waterways Urban Canoeing. Led by Teen Teamworks Park Pathways and Youth Development staff, youth ages 9 – 14 learn about water safety, teamwork, and the natural environment. They explore the Minneapolis' superb waterways while working in teams to walk, bike, canoe and kayak long distances.

Teen Teamworks Park Pathways youth create strong relationships with younger youth and offer a high quality out of school time experiences that strengthen families and communities, while gaining incredible insight, skills and experience during their summer employment.

### **Individual Placement - Recreation Division**

Full-time MPRB staff volunteer to mentor and supervise Teen Teamworks youth. The volunteer mentors come from all divisions of the MPBR including Center Directors, Recreation Leaders and Youthline staff. The youth assigned to these volunteers gain a variety of job experiences. Youthworkers were responsible for monitoring the safety of small children using the wading pools, tot lots, computer labs 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. Other experiences included setting up, marking and maintaining of football, soccer, softball and baseball fields. Teens developed important leadership skills and had the chance to become mentors themselves.

### **Educational Internships**

Four youth who expressed an interest in education careers were able to intern with Minnesota teachers in our educational component Earn While You Learn. Youth assisted staff with curriculum materials, were able to lead small group discussions, assisted in evaluating class comprehension and maintained time and attendance records. Interns also worked one on one with youth in the classroom that required or requested additional tutoring.

### **Computer Labs**

This summer Teen Teamworks partnered with the Osiris Organization to provide positions as Computer Lab Support Technicians. The Osiris staff trained interns in technical support, troubleshooting, back office and Google Docs while customer service training was provided by Teen Teamworks. Interns were individually placed at recreation centers close to their homes and received day to day supervision and support from park staff. Interns were responsible for the maintenance of 7 – 12 computer stations, with the assistance of Osiris staff, at their assigned park providing customer service to all computer lab users.

### **Academic Enrichment**

In addition to these work experiences, all youth also participate in the academic enrichment component of the Teen Teamwork project - Earn While You Learn. For the fifth consecutive summer, Teen Teamwork was awarded the contract to provide educational services to all City of Minneapolis STEP-UP youth. The curriculum focuses on three areas:

1. Basic skills development in reading, writing and math to develop and reinforce program participants' knowledge of graduation standards.
2. Exploration of personal and social issues facing today's youth (for example: teen parenting, family values, money management skills, 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).
3. S.T.E.M. (science, technology, engineering and math) topics span from non-traditional career assessments to examining each individual's carbon footprint. Students take time to study the shapes that make structures strong and apply their learning in hands-on activities.

Supervisors and youthworkers 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 developed an understanding of 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. Also, guest speakers were invited to speak to our youth about relevant topics and they had the freedom to propose the specific lesson plan they would use. Guest speakers allow youth to develop avenues for establishing positive relationships with adults in their local community, and this summer we chose to have the Minneapolis Police Department's Crime Prevention Interns, Metro Transit's Customer Advocate, and Community mentors from Seen on Da Streets come make presentations about relevant issues facing youth in Minneapolis.

Using a variety of interactive teaching techniques, including panel discussions and laboratory sessions, educational staff help the youth learn about appropriate work attitudes and behavior, sexual harassment, educational options, career exploration, decision-making, financial literacy, teen parenting, relationship values, violence, and family issues.

These classes are offered to youth employed by Teen Teamworks and the City of Minneapolis' STEP-UP. By working with Minneapolis Public Schools' Area Learning Center Division, and the Independent School District 916 we are able to ensure that all youth who receive education this summer have the ability to receive credit for successful participation in class.

Classes were held at North Community High School and South High School. A benefit to holding our classes in a Minneapolis public school is that they are easily accessible for youth with disabilities. Special arrangements have and will be made in regards to ensuring that youth with disabilities are able to be included in our classrooms. By planning in advance, small buses and crew trucks used by MPRB Teen Teamworks can be utilized to bring students to and home from the school.

Leadership camps are facilitated by MPRB Community Outreach staff and attended by all Teen Teamworks crew members. This three session camp instructs and encourages conversations with youth in developing strategies to communicate effectively in all areas of their lives and build self-esteem. The camps finished by combining all crews together to express their feelings towards their supervisors and celebrate their own personal growth development. Feedback from youth has been very positive and important connections were developed.

**Profile of Youth Served this summer**

<b>PARTICIPANT SUMMARY INFORMATION</b>		
Total Participants Served		250
<b>Gender</b>	A. Male	157
	B. Female	93
<b>Age</b>	A. 14 – 15	186
	B. 16 – 17	45
	C. 18	9
	D. 19 – 21	10
	E. 22 – 24	0
<b>Ethnicity / Race</b>	A. Hispanic/Latino	9
	B. American Indian or Alaska Native	2
	C. Asian/Pacific Islander	29
	D. Black or African American	208
	E. White	2
<b>Education Level</b>	A. 8 <sup>th</sup> grade and under	65
	B. 9 <sup>th</sup> Grade – 12 <sup>th</sup> Grade	159
	C. High School graduate or equivalent	26
	D. Post-Secondary Education	
<b>Other Demographics</b>	A. Limited English Proficient	7
	B. Youth From Families Receiving Public Assistance	223
	C. Foster Youth	4
	D. Youth with a Disability	37
	E. High School Drop-Out	4
	F. Youth Offender	8
	G. Pregnant or Parenting Youth	1
	H. Basic Skills Deficient	163
	I. Homeless or Runaway Youth	6
	J. Not Employed at Program Enrollment	250
	K. Veteran	0
<b>PROGRAM SERVICES, ACTIVITIES, AND OTHER RELATED ASSISTANCE</b>		
A. Received Education or Job Training Activities		250

B. Received Work Experience Activities	250
C. Received Community Involvement and Leadership Development Activities	203
D. Received Post-Secondary Exploration, Career Guidance and Planning Activities	250
E. Received Mentoring Activities	250
F. Received Support Services	36
<b>INDICATORS OF PERFORMANCE</b>	
A. Attained Work Readiness or Education Goals in ISS	247
B. Received Academic Credit or Service Learning Credit	233
C. Obtained High School Diploma, GED, Remained in School, Obtained a Certificate or Degree, or Dropout – Returned to School	233
D. Entered Post Secondary Education, Vocational/Occupational Skills Training, Apprenticeship, Military, Job Search or Employment	14
E. Completion Rate	98.8%
<b>CUSTOMER SATISFACTION</b>	
A. Number of participants rating experience as “Excellent”	56.2%
B. Number of participants rating experience as “Very Good”	28.5%
C. Number of participants rating experience as “Average”	8.5%
D. Number of participants rating experience as “Below Average”	5.6%
E. Number of participants rating experience as “Poor”	0.0%
F. Total Number of Surveys Completed	218

### **Outcomes**

All staff, worksite supervisors and educational staff in the Teen Teamworks demonstrate an ethic of service to the youth. There is a real sense of care 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 and the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board. At the same time, 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.

By partnering with Minneapolis Public Schools (as an accredited Area Learning Center) and Independent School District 916, we are able to provide youth with a recovery credit or letters of credit to be turned into their school counselor for credit at their home school. We continue to work with youth who are enrolled in schools outside of the district or in an alternative school to assist them in making sure they receive a credit. Although not all youth were eligible to receive the recovery credit, 100% of the youth that completed the program this summer were awarded with a certificate of completion.

### **Program Costs/Funding Sources**

The program cost per participant (including tools, transportation, the educational curriculum development and leadership) is approximately \$ 2,750 per participant.

DEED	\$200,000 .00
MPRB	\$144,000.00
General Mills	\$15,000.00
Step Up/Enclave	\$289,051.00
SU Interns	\$3,570.00
City of MPLS	\$70,500.00
SU Education	\$60,610.00
Achieve	\$5,600.00
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$788,331.00</b>