

Date: June 17, 2019
To: Board of Park Commissioners/Park District Oversight Committee
From: Justin Cutler, Recreation Director, Seattle Parks and Recreation
Subject: Innovative Programs in Recreation

Requested Board Action

Seattle Parks and Recreation (SPR) is a hub of recreation programs and activities for people of all ages and walks of life in the Seattle area. This is an informational briefing about SPR's Recreation Division and some of the innovative programming that is happening and on the rise. No decision is requested.

Background

SPR's Recreation Division is a leading provider of traditional recreation activities and programs in support of Seattle's diverse communities. As our program offerings have grown, we have become more creative in expanding our reach and providing increased services to specific demographic groups.

According to the May 2016 Growth and Equity Report issued by the Seattle Office of Planning and Community Development, factors such as unequal distribution of wealth among city residents and a continual shift in neighborhood demographics, create an opportunity for Recreation staff to rethink programming and activation.

In addition, research shows a strong correlation between obesity in children and their use of technology. According to www.livestrong.com, technology when paired with physical activity can help young people overcome the challenges of a sedentary lifestyle.

At the presentation before the board and committee, the Recreation Director will share some of the emerging best practices related to the programming opportunities listed below and how Seattle Parks and Recreation can capitalize on their benefits.

Current Innovative Programming:

Seattle Parks and Recreation is a national leader in the following areas for recreation services across the country. We have presented on these topics at national recreation conferences and are sought out by peer organizations related to our efforts in the following areas.

1. SPR's Lifelong Recreation Unit provides physical activity and social engagement to continue encouraging healthy lifestyles for Seattle's residents aged 50 and older.
 - a. The Dementia-Friendly Recreation program serves those suffering from memory loss. Research shows that staying active and social slows the progress of dementia. This program provides day trips, art classes, social gatherings, and special events.
 - b. The Food and Fitness program reaches the East African, Korean, and Vietnamese communities by pairing healthy food options with fitness, social engagement, and educational workshops.

- c. Rainbow Recreation is a partnership between SPR's Lifelong Recreation and Generations Aging with Pride to provide recreational opportunities for LGBTQ adults 50 years old and older.
2. SPR's Parks Activation program offers activities, programs, and special events in local parks, providing communities with places to share interests and work collaboratively which increases park usage and enriches the life of the neighborhood.
3. SPR's Get Moving program uses Community Engagement Ambassadors (CEAs) to connect underserved communities to City services and programs. CEAs do this by using the "power of touch" method, an inclusive engagement and outreach strategy that effectively reaches marginalized communities to increase awareness and participation in city resources, opportunities, and programs. CEAs provide translation, interpretation, outreach, and technical assistance. And, they promote City programs, classes, events, and activities.
4. The Citywide Teen and Young Adult Unit has provided Late Night Teen programming for over 30 years. This is a safe and supportive environment for teens and young adults to engage in activities between the hours of 7 p.m. and midnight every Friday and Saturday at SPR facilities citywide. Program offerings include:
 - a. Lifeguard Training for youth 13-19 year olds at Rainier Beach Pool as an early career opportunity for young people and creating a pathway to employment with SPR's Aquatics Unit.
 - b. The Late Night program located at Southwest, Garfield and Meadowbrook Teen Life Centers, and Bitter lake, High Point, Rainier, Rainier Beach, South Park, and Van Asselt community centers, provides the opportunity for school-age teens to engage in programs and activities; youth receive free meals through funding provided by the Child and Adult Care Food Program.
 - c. The Great Night program located at Jefferson Community Center was created as a spin-off from Late Night and is intended for young adults ages 19+. Great Night provides a combination of sports and fitness as well as educational opportunities for young adults to learn both soft and technical skills toward local trades.

Programming Opportunities:

SPR's Recreation Division strives to be at the forefront of innovative programming by researching local and national trends, exploring new ways to reach to community members who are not active, and implementing best practices gleaned from other parks and recreation departments throughout the country. We completed an analysis of best practices related to future programming and compared it to our existing offerings. Some of the areas of improvement are listed below. Several of these concepts are in support of proactively addressing some of the new challenges we face in Seattle. Additional details will be provided as part of the presentation at the joint Park Board/Park District Oversight Committee meeting.

- A. Use of technology
 - a. Lu Interactive Playground projection system merging physical fitness with technology. (i.e. Xbox Connect Technology)

- b. On-demand fitness classes expand capacity for one instructor to provide services at multiple facilities and allows patrons to participate in fitness at a time convenient for them. (e.g., Peloton, Fitness Blender)
 - c. 3D Virtual Reality Tours allowing customers to see space at facilities and parks before visiting. (e.g., real estate tours of residential properties)
 - d. Esports Leagues and video game competitions. This has grown to the point of becoming larger than the NHL in prize money, team investment, and market value.
- B. Facility-dedicated staffing and centralized programming
 - C. Customer Service Centers for customers and staff
 - D. Measurements systems for customer service experience

If there are challenges or trends that you have observed in our community. there will be time at the meeting for you to share your observations and perspectives on the future of recreation programming.

Adaptations for the Future:

As resources become more finite in Seattle, we are challenged to consider our investment and impact related to the use of scarce public resources. Within the Recreation Division we are assessing the results and outcome of our work related to community center hours, program planning, grants distributed, and staffing resources. It is important that we review our work and our outputs on a regular basis to ensure that we are achieving our intended outcomes in alignment with Mayoral, Council, Parks and Recreation Board, partner and neighborhood priorities. As part of this process, the Recreation Division will be using a Leisure and Life Stage framework to consider each life stage and the specific recreation needs along the age continuum. These outcomes will be informed by specific cultural needs and values expressed on a neighborhood and community level.

Future programming will consider the tenets of Race a Social Justice, Human-Centered Design, and Continuous Improvement. Our programming will also work to become nimble, and responsive to community needs, in contrast to being encumbered by program guides and six-month planning cycles. We will work to leverage technology to our advantage through online registration, customer engagement, and multimedia interactions.

Some examples of future outcome-based programming statements may include:

- Preschoolers and their caregivers will have a safe place to play indoors during inclement weather, extreme heat events, and during times of reduced air quality.
- Preschoolers will have access to licensed childcare opportunities.
- School-aged children will have a safe place to access a quality after-school snack.
- School-aged children will have the opportunity to participate in an after-school activity improving school performance and increasing the sense of community.
- Young adults will have a positive relationship with an adult in addition to their primary caregiver.
- Young adults will have the opportunity to learn core job readiness skills in order to build a sense of independence, autonomy, and self-control.

- Adults will have access to fitness opportunities to reduce stress, maintain physical/mental/spiritual health.
- Adults will have a venue to congregate for social celebrations of cultural importance that reinforce cultural identity and social cohesion.
- Older adults will have a safe place to congregate to reduce the negative health impacts of social isolation.

Our aim is to inspire participation and co-create and curate recreation experiences in partnership with the neighbors we serve. Each outcome will engage staff and community partners in the development of a logic model defining inputs, resources, and best practice strategies to support the achievement of each outcome. Furthermore, as a division we will use our current resources with thoughtfulness and purpose, and earn additional resources through the achievement of our outcomes, by leveraging the strength of our team and the spirit of our community.