



Memorandum

Date: July 8, 2019

To: Park District Oversight Committee

From: Justin Cutler, Recreation Division Director
Brenda Kramer, Manager Specialized Programs Unit
Cheryl Brown, Program Coordinator, Lifelong Recreation

Subject: Lifelong Recreation Programs for ages 50+

Requested Committee Action

Briefing is for information only.

Project or Policy Description and Background

In 2019, the Specialized Programs Unit became supported entirely by Park District funds.

The Lifelong Recreation Program for ages 50+

For over 40 years, the Seattle Parks and Recreation Lifelong Recreation program, part of the department's Recreation Division, has been serving the senior population with vibrant programs that focus on physical activity, social engagement, education, arts, creativity and healthy lifestyles. Our programs are designed to serve adults of all abilities – those who are physically active, those who are just becoming active and those who have age-related limitations.

Our staff consists of five Recreation Specialists providing programs at community centers in five geographic districts, one Recreation Specialist administering the Sound Steps Walking Program and the Food and Fitness Program and one Specialist working part time on the Dementia Friendly Recreation program. Our Program Coordinator has city-wide responsibilities to the staff and programs and currently coordinates our Rainbow Recreation program. Our manager oversees the work of Lifelong Recreation and the Special Populations unit.

Each specialist supervises instructors and volunteers who provide recreational, educational and social programs at the community centers in their area, as well as lead trips, foster community partnerships, and work with community agencies who serve seniors. They represent Lifelong Recreation at city-wide resource events, at professional conferences and other meetings.

Signature Programs

Making the City's Race & Social Justice Initiative a priority in our work, we began the pattern of offering programs that target a specific need or target population. To that end we have had several programs that were initiated and incorporated into our everyday operation and developed four stand-alone **Signature programs** that continue to grow.

The **Sound Steps** program was launched in 2003 through the Healthy Aging Partnership as a public health initiative funded by the Center for Disease Control and implemented through Lifelong Recreation. The program was designed to reduce the incidence of obesity and diabetes in people over 50 by encouraging exercise. It started with a few summer weekly walking groups and has expanded across the city operating out of parks, churches, senior centers and community centers. When the five-year CDC grant ended, Sound Steps was so successful that Seattle Parks and Recreation prioritized funding for a permanent part-time position to maintain and grow the program. In 2018, there were 23 weekly walks serving 268 walkers per week, 12 hikes and 13 special events.

In 2004, the **Food and Fitness** program started through a partnership with the Seattle Mayor's Office for Senior Citizens and in response to the City's Race and Social Justice Initiative. To increase access to healthy food choices that were culturally relevant and to increase health and wellness activities for immigrant and refugee elders, Seattle Parks and Recreation created the program with various other agencies. The program continues today serving the East African community two days per week at Yesler Community Center and one day per week at Northgate Community Center, Korean elders at Miller Community Center two days per week and Vietnamese elders two days per week at Garfield Community Center. The program includes a meal prepared by volunteers, physical activities including line dance, tai chi, table tennis, karaoke, holiday celebrations and other services including health screenings, nutritional counseling, educational programs and ESL classes. In 2018, we served 21,979 meals in the three programs.

Starting in 2011, Lifelong Recreation began offering several program opportunities designed for the growing number of people living with dementia in the Seattle community. The goal of this program has been to build dementia-friendly opportunities in the arts, fitness, trips, special events and volunteerism in every sector of the city. People living with dementia are actively involved in guiding program development, and many community partners are used to execute the programs. In August 2014, voters approved the Seattle Park District, which provided funding for a permanent part-time position responsible for coordinating and expanding **Dementia-Friendly Recreation**. In 2017, this program won an award for Program Excellence in Innovative Programming from the Washington Recreation and Park Association (WRPA). In 2018, there were 37 programs offered with 100 new participants this year. Total program participation was 875.

In 2015, staff attended an American Society on Aging conference meeting on the needs of LGBTQ elders, and the seed was planted for our **Rainbow Recreation** program. Several LGBTQ Resource Fairs were held across the city where surveys were administered, partnerships formed, and plans made. In 2017 Lifelong Recreation launched Rainbow Recreation from Cal Anderson Park and Miller Community Center with an ARC Equity Grant. Offering our standard slate of programs including fitness, arts, social opportunities and trips to this population has opened the doors to an otherwise isolated and underserved group. It is our goal to expand program opportunities across the city. Currently this program is administered by our Program Coordinator, but the program has grown to the point that it cannot be supported without funds for a designated part time position. In 2018, Rainbow Recreation won an award for Program Excellence in Cultural Competency from

the WRPA. In 2018, we offered 33 classes, eight trips, eight educational programs and seven special events. There were 1,478 program hours serving 386 participants.

Attachments:

Numbers

Rainbow Recreation Flyer

Lifelong Recreation Summer 2019