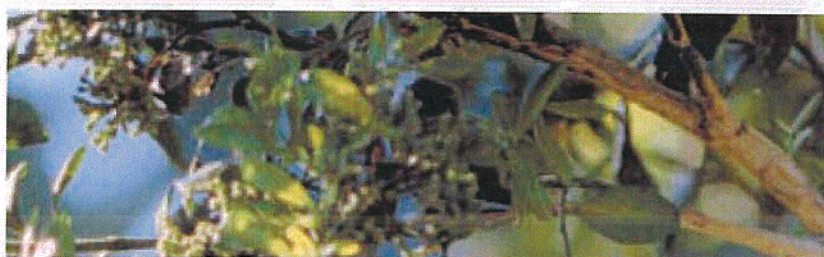


KIDS & CONCENTRATION



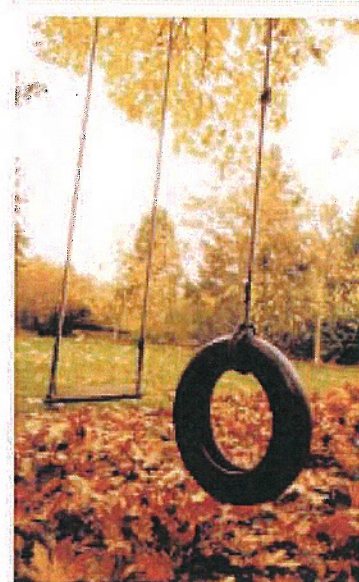
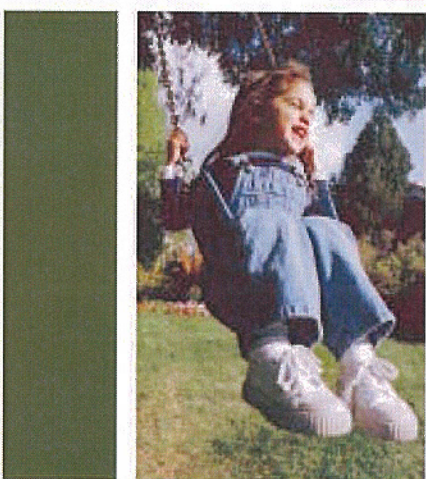
University of Illinois
Landscape & Human
Health Laboratory

www.lhhl.uiuc.edu

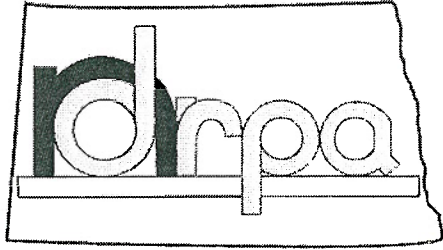
Kids who spend more time outside
end up paying more attention inside.

The symptoms
of ADHD in chil-
dren are actually
reduced after
contact with
nature.

ADHD kids are better able to concentrate, complete tasks,
and follow directions after playing in natural settings.



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NORTH DAKOTA RECREATION & PARK ASSOCIATION

**Testimony of Steven M. Neu
North Dakota Recreation & Park Association
Presented to the
Interim Education Committee
December 5, 2007**

HCR 3046

Madam Chair and members of the Interim Education Committee: My name is Steven M. Neu, board member of the North Dakota Recreation & Park Association (NDRPA), 12-year member and past president (2005-06) of the National Recreation & Park Association, and director of the Bismarck Parks & Recreation District. NDRPA represents more than 500 members across the state, including park board members and park district staff, in advancing parks and recreation for quality of life in North Dakota. We appreciate the opportunity to speak with you today about the role of parks and recreation in healthy lifestyles and livable communities.

Historical Perspective on Parks and Recreation

Public parks and recreation have a long and noteworthy history in the United States, dating back to 1857 with the establishment of the nation's first major public park – New York City's Central Park. Designed by Frederick Law Olmsted and Calvert Vaux, the park had four primary objectives:

- To provide an idyllic counterpart to the noise and confusion of the city,
- To include places where people, especially children, could play,
- To bring together different groups of people for social interaction, and
- To be a strategic public investment that positively impacted area real estate development, altered land use patterns and reshaped the city's character.

The playground movement began in the 1890s in response to the lack of public spaces to relax and recreate and limited environmental regulations and public health codes. Public parks were built to beautify communities, improve air quality, reduce the risk of disease and to provide a place for play, physical activity and social engagement.

Joseph Lee earned the title of "Godfather of Play" by fighting for playgrounds and safe place for children to play to keep them off the streets and out of jails. North Dakota's first park district was established in Grand Forks in 1905. President Theodore Roosevelt hosted a national conference on play in 1906, lending credibility and support to national efforts to inform the public about the social and educational values of play and recreation.

The social, mental, physical, environmental and economic benefits (Dr. John Crompton, Texas A&M University) of public parks and recreation have been well documented. Parks and recreation facilities:

- provide the opportunity to be physically active,
- create economic benefits,
- provide vital green space,
- preserve critical wildlife habitat,
- facilitate social interactions,
- provide leisure activities to improve moods and mental well-being,
- provide organized structured activities,
- provide community,
- offer an outlet for therapeutic recreation, and
- embody the tradition of preserving public lands for the benefit and use of all.

Healthy Lifestyles, Livable Communities

A healthy, livable community is one that represents many facets—from promoting physical activity and ensuring proper nutrition to safety and injury prevention, attention to the built environment and disaster preparedness. Healthy people (children and adults) need healthy places. A livable community is one that offers residents and visitors healthy places to facilitate purposeful and productive lifestyles (at work, school, play, worship and in the neighborhood) through diverse efforts such as transit-orientated development, community gardens and pedestrian-friendly paths. Among the many elements of livable communities are:

- decent, affordable, well-located housing,
- good schools and educational institutions,
- convenient shops and services,
- accessible parks and open space,
- clean, natural environment,
- places that feel safe and accepting to all users, and
- environments that nurture human community and interaction.

Further, community livability refers to the environmental and social quality of an area as perceived by residents, employees and visitors (Weissman and Corbett, 1992, “Livability,” VTPI, 2004). This includes:

- safety and health (traffic safety, personal security, public health),
- local environmental quality (cleanliness, noise, dust, air quality, water quality),
- community cohesion (neighborliness, respect, community identity),
- opportunities for recreation and entertainment,
- aesthetics, and
- the existence of unique cultural and environmental resources (e.g., historic structures, mature trees, traditional architectural styles).

Defining our livable communities is more than water, sewer, roads, bridges and jails.

Being Active

Recreation is an activity that renews one’s health and spirits by enjoyment and relaxation. Parks and facilities support many different types of recreation, not only physical activity but also arts, music, cultural events, social interaction and other activities necessary for a healthy lifestyle. Physical activity, which is most commonly associated with parks and recreation, includes not only organized sports but also play, dance, theater and outdoor experiences such as hunting and fishing, among others. Regular physical activity:

- reduces the risk for obesity, diabetes and other chronic diseases,
- assists in improved academic performance,
- helps people feel better about themselves physically, mentally and socially,
- reduces the risk for depression and the effects of stress,
- helps people become and remain productive, healthy members of society, and
- improves overall quality of life.

Further, a specific kind of activity – play – is very important in a child’s development (attached – Frost and Norquist, “The Importance of Play”, 2007). In addition to the physical benefits of play, numerous studies have shown that kids learn and develop in other ways through play, including:

- emotional, social and cognitive skills,
- motor development,
- negotiation and problem-solving skills,
- independent thinking,
- a greater imagination,
- creativity, and
- valuable knowledge about social norms, risk-taking and group interactions.

Research has proven that parks and recreation are key to helping people become and remain active, particularly physically active. Recent findings include:

- The creation of or enhanced access to places for physical activity combined with informational outreach produces a 48% increase in frequency of physical activity. (Kahn et al. and the Task Force on Community Preventive Services. 2002. “The effectiveness of interventions to increase physical activity.” *American Journal of Preventive Medicine*, 22 (4S), 87-88.)
- Access to facilities like parks and activity programs is associated with more activity for both children and adults. (Sallis, Prochaska, and Taylor. 2000. “A review of correlates of physical activity of children and adolescents.” *Medicine and Science in Sports and Exercise*, 32, 963-975.)
- The more time that children spend outdoors, the more likely they are to be active. (Baranowski and Puhl. 1993. “Observations on physical activity in physical locations: Age, gender, and month effects.” *Research Quarterly for Exercise and Sport*, 64, 127-133.)
- The CDC determined that creating and improving places to be active can result in a 25% increase in the percentage of people who exercise at least three times a week. (Centers for Disease Control & Prevention. 2002. Guide to Community Preventive Services—<http://www.thecommunityguide.org/pa/default.htm>.)
- The closer people live to a bikeway, the more likely they are to use it. (Troped, Saunders, Pate et al. 2001.)
- Communities should be designed so that all people have a park within at least one mile of their residence. (Cohen et al. 2007. “Contribution of Public Parks to Physical Activity.” *American Journal of Public Health*, 97 (3), 509-514.)
- Among lower income urban and suburban U.S. adults, having access to trails was found to be positively associated with meeting recommended levels of physical activity. (Parks Housemann, Bronwson. 2003. “Differential correlates of physical

activity in urban and rural adults of various socioeconomic backgrounds in the U.S.” *Journal of Epidemiological Community Health*, 57, 29-35.)

- Three out of four people say they use trails for recreation. (Shafer, Lee, and Turner. 2000. “A tale of three greenways trails: User perceptions related to quality of life.” *Landscape and Urban Planning*, 49, 163-178.)
- Access to attractive large public open spaces is associated with higher levels of walking. (Giles-Corti, Broomhall, Knuiman et al. 2005. “Increasing walking: How important is distance to, attractiveness, and size of public space?” *American Journal of Preventive Medicine*, 28 (2S2), 169-185.)
- Scenery and things to see are important reasons for walking. (Wilcox, Castro, King et al. 2000. “Determinants of leisure time physical activity in rural compared with urban, older and ethnically diverse women in the U.S.” *Journal of Epidemiology and Community Health*, 54, 667-672.)
- The presence of trees and grass is related to greater use of outdoor spaces and the amount of social activity in those areas. (Sullivan, Kuo, and DePooter. 2004. “The fruit of urban nature. Vital neighborhood spaces.” *Environment and Behavior*, 36 (5), 678-700.)
- A significant relationship exists between perceived safety related to crime and being physically active. (Centers for Disease Control & Prevention. 1996. “Neighborhood safety and the prevalence of physical activity—selected states.” *MMWR Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report*, 47, 143-146.)
- Youth receiving additional physical activity tend to show improved attributes such as increased brain function and nourishment, higher energy/concentration levels, changes in body build affecting self esteem, increased self-esteem and better behavior, which may all support cognitive learning. (Cocke, 2002. Tremblay, Inman, & Willms, 2000. Dwyer, Coonan, Leitch, Hetzel, & Baghurst, 1983. Shephard, 1997. www.sports-media.org/sportapolisnewsletter19.htm.)

Education on Being Active

There is a lifelong activity continuum beginning with preschool and continuing through K-12 education, college, work and retirement. Education is needed throughout this continuum to encourage and inform people about how to be active and stay healthy. To be successful in educating people, it is essential to understand motivation and attitude. In sports, for example, researchers have identified more than 100 reasons that people participate (Green, 1996). These can be grouped into three areas of active participation:

- achievement motivation – the need to compete, win and be the best,
- social motivation – the desire to interact with others, and
- mastery motivation – the need to learn and develop skills.

It is also important to understand spectator (passive) motivation because it enhances opportunities for involvement for both the active and passive participants. Among these motivations (Wann, Melnick, Russell & Pease, 2001) are:

- diversion from everyday life,
- entertainment value,
- self-esteem enhancement,
- sense of fulfillment,
- economic gain,

- aesthetic value,
- need for affiliation, and
- family ties.

Finally, understanding a person's attitudes (experiences, feelings and beliefs) about participation is critical in providing appropriate education on how to be active. Education, combined with accessible, affordable and sustainable activity, is key to promoting healthy lifestyles.

Parks and Recreation: Creating Play in North Dakota

For a century, public parks and recreation in North Dakota have provided citizens access to places and activities necessary for healthy lifestyles through good stewardship of available resources. Park districts, the state and other public park providers support their efforts through fees and other generated revenue, property taxes and state aid.

A number of federal programs also help support parks and recreation in North Dakota. In 1964, Congress established the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) to provide for the acquisition and development of public land to meet the needs of all Americans for outdoor recreation and open space. The legislation provides 50/50 matching grants-in-aid to states and their political subdivisions. The LWCF was funded at its highest level of \$369 million in 1979. This year's appropriation was less than \$28 million. Since its inception 43 years ago, the program has provided more than 1,152 grants for North Dakota projects with matching funds of almost \$34 million.

The Recreation Trails Program was established in 1993 to assist local communities and trail groups in the development, maintenance or rehabilitation of recreational trails. Grants of \$4.3 million have funded more than 150 projects in North Dakota at an 80/20 match.

The Safe Routes to Schools program is designed to enable and encourage kids to walk and bike to school safely. North Dakota is expected to receive approximately \$1 million dollars in federal monies each year for five fiscal years for infrastructure and non-infrastructure projects.

In addition, some park districts offer matching grant programs to support projects in their community. For example, the Bismarck Parks & Recreation District has helped support \$3 million in projects over the past 10 years with a return of \$2 for every \$1 invested.

Park districts often collaborate with other government entities and organizations to enhance community facilities. Examples in the Bismarck Parks and Recreation District include the Community Bowl and the planned aquatic center at Bismarck State College. The Fargo Park District partnered with local nonprofits for its universal playground.

Three primary issues for public parks and recreation in North Dakota are accessibility, affordability and sustainability. Despite partnerships with school districts, park districts across the state often do not have enough space to accommodate the demand for indoor activities in their communities. Sports teams get turned away, and there are significant waiting lists for after-school programs. Affordability is an issue as public parks and recreation facilities struggle to accommodate increasing demand while maintaining low fees and scholarships for those who need them. The sustainability of funding for new and existing facility upgrades is also an issue, particularly as LWCF appropriations have been drastically reduced since the 1980s. LWCF projects are aging, and there is extremely limited funding through LWCF for enhancement and upgrades to those facilities, which are valuable community infrastructure.

Examples of Success

Other states have been successful in investing funds to advance parks and recreation to support healthy lifestyles and livable communities. Colorado invests its lottery proceeds in parks and recreation. More than \$1.7 billion has been returned to the state for parks, recreation, open space, conservation education and wildlife projects since the lottery started in 1983. In 2005 alone, more than \$113.7 million was distributed to local parks and recreation providers and state parks for open space and land acquisition, equipment purchases, facility development, park maintenance, and renovation or restoration of local facilities. South Dakota has successfully used sales tax dollars to support parks and recreation facility development in communities such as Aberdeen and Sioux Falls. For example, extra penny sales tax dollars are used for capital improvements in Aberdeen, including community-related projects such as Wylie Park and Storybook Land. Wyoming invests significant dollars from its mineral industry in parks and recreation.

The National Recreation & Park Association (NRPA), of which NDRPA is a state affiliate, has established partnerships to facilitate health and livability. NRPA's Step Up to Health initiative provides park and recreation agencies with assistance in advancing the role of parks and recreation in health. In 2006, NRPA Step Up to Health recognized many successful model programs (attached), including:

- Program Grants Aid Local Efforts – strategic partnerships add value and financial support to improve health and livability in Saint Paul, Minnesota;
- Programs-Promotion-Partnerships – strategic program enhancements and partnerships support a healthy community in Gainesville, Georgia;
- Improving Programs and Places for Play to Serve All Cultures – expanding programs to older adults and upgrading facilities allow for more physical activity in Oakland, California;
- Public, Private, Non-Profit Partnerships – strategic partnerships bring countless benefits to Scottsdale, Arizona; and
- Parks Upgraded to Promote Active Use – small and large improvements to facilities, parks and pathways increase active participation in Vernon Hills, Illinois.

NRPA is also working with the Sājai Foundation™ on its *Sājai Wise Kids*™ curriculum, a nine-week program that teaches children how to make positive physical activity and nutrition choices, and with AARP to increase the frequency of routine walking with our nation's older adults.

NRPA, YMCA of the USA, and the National Association for Sport and Physical Education are working together as conveners of the Partnership for Play Every Day to increase the spaces and quality of play for our country's children and youth. This partnership and its efforts are a direct recommendation from a February 2007 report from the Stanford School of Medicine entitled "Building 'Generation Play': Addressing the Crisis of Inactivity Among America's Children." The vision of the Partnership for Play Every Day is to increase the number of youth participating in at least 60 minutes of quality physical activity daily through programs and opportunities before, during and after the school day.

Economic Impact of Parks and Recreation

Not only do parks contribute to healthy lifestyles and livable communities, but they also have a positive economic impact in communities. They:

- improve property values,

- increase the tax base,
- expand retail sales,
- stimulate development, and
- attract tourists, businesses and retirees.

Further, parks help to alleviate/reduce youth crime, reduce environmental stress and lower the cost of health care.

As the state's economy grows, so too does the need for expanded parks, recreation facilities and open space that support healthy lifestyles and livable communities. "Creating place" – where people live, work and play – is an essential piece of economic development. Attracting young people to the state depends not only on the availability of jobs but also on the accessibility and affordability of activities beyond work, including parks and recreation.

Traditionally, environmental studies are conducted during a new business development process. Additional health and community impact studies are needed as well to ensure a community can maintain and grow its level of service for other necessities such as schools, police, fire and parks. Other states such as Georgia have begun conducting community impact studies to determine the impact of new jobs/businesses on public facilities that enhance healthy lifestyles. This is especially critical along corridors of development in North Dakota like Highway 83, which lacks an infrastructure for parks and recreation and other activities to attract and support families along with workers.

Opportunities for Investment in North Dakota

The Stanford School of Medicine "Building 'Generation Play'" study provided specific recommendations to address the lack of activity among children for home, schools, mass media, healthcare, industry, communities and government. Among the government recommendations (attached) are:

- Pass laws that will provide adequate incentives, and adequate funding, for schools, industry, and the community to promote multi-sectoral efforts to increase childhood physical activity.
- Allocate resources for the restructuring of current urban design and for new development that would encourage walking and biking.
- Allocate funding for communities to set aside land for public open space and for the creation of safe playgrounds and recreation centers.

With the state's growing economy, now is the time to support investment in public parks and recreation in North Dakota that are essential for healthy lifestyles and livable communities. NDRPA has identified a number of specific opportunities for state investment:

- Dedicated public parks and recreation state fund – In the face of falling federal dollars, establishing a dedicated state fund to support public facilities, both new development and upgrades and enhancements to existing facilities, is essential. NDRPA recommends funding at \$2 million per biennium.
- Incentive program for parks and recreation and school physical education staff – In the past, the state has provided funds to help communities such as Beulah, Casselton and Grafton hire professional parks and recreation staff to support facilities and activities. Over time, these communities were able to retain staff, often in partnership with schools. This type of incentive program would enhance parks and recreation opportunities in smaller, more rural communities.

- **Prairie Rose State Games** – The Prairie Rose State Games, a multi-sport festival for North Dakota's amateur athletes, began in 1987 with state support from Governor Sinner. Over time, state funding and support for the Games has lessened. The time has come for the state to step up support for the Games or simply step away, allowing the nonprofit board to operate the Games independently of the state, a model that has proven successful in Montana (www.bigskygames.org).

Partnering for Success in North Dakota

The crisis of inactivity among our children is a significant one with serious implications for the future. The Stanford report cited earlier noted that inactivity among children may result in this generation being the first in American history to have a shorter lifespan than their parents. We cannot live in isolation but must instead work together to provide opportunities for children and adults to choose healthy lifestyles. NDRPA acknowledges the importance of this study and its role in identifying ways for government, nonprofits and private entities to work together. We affirm our support for this effort and our willingness to work with the legislature and other partners to ensure our children have the opportunities they need to play and be active to enhance their educational success and maintain healthy lifestyles throughout their lives.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak to you about parks and recreation, healthy lifestyles and livable communities. I would be happy to answer any questions.

Additional Resources

- National Recreation & Park Association: www.nrpa.org/health
- Partnership for Play Every Day: www.playeveryday.org
- Voice of Play: <http://voiceofplay.org>
- National Coalition for Promoting Physical Activity: www.ncppa.org/
- KaBOOM!: www.kaboom.org
- Landscape and Human Health Laboratory, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign: www.lhhl.uiuc.edu
- Center for Livable Communities: www.lgc.org/center/
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention: www.cdc.gov/healthyplaces
- Environmental Protection Agency: www.epa.gov/smartgrowth

Attachments

- Frost, Joe L. and Tom Norquist, "The Importance of Play," *Recreation Management*, May 2007.
- NRPA Step Up to Health 2006 excerpts.
- Stanford School of Medicine, "Building 'Generation Play': Addressing the Crisis of Inactivity Among America's Children," February 2007, excerpt.

"Make no little plans; they have no magic to stir men's blood and probably themselves will not be realized. Make big plans; aim high in hope and work, remembering that a noble, logical diagram once recorded will not die, but long after we are gone be a living thing, asserting itself with every-growing insistence."

—Daniel Burnham, 1910



THE MAGAZINE WITH IDEAS & SOLUTIONS FOR RECREATION, SPORTS & FITNESS FACILITIES MANAGERS

The Importance of Play

Association Guest Column: International Playground Equipment Manufacturers Association (IPEMA)

By Joe L. Frost and Tom Norquist

Play is recognized as a fundamental right of every child by the United Nations High Commission for Human Rights. However, this right is currently challenged by a host of forces, leading to the reduction or deletion of outdoor play, recess and physical education for growing numbers of American children. These challenges include the influence of sedentary technology, high-stakes testing, changing family structures, excessive and inconsistent playground safety standards, lawsuits and threats of lawsuits, threats of violence and environmental dangers, and failure of policy makers and other groups to understand the importance of active play for development, learning and health.

The voluminous evidence for free, outdoor play dates back to ancient Greece and Rome, and gained support in hundreds of scholarly research reports throughout the 20th century. Many leading philosophers and educators, including Plato, Aristotle, Quintilian, Luther, Rabelais, Comenius, Locke, Rousseau, Pestalozzi, Froebel, Groos, Hall, Spencer, Dewey, Piaget, Vygotsky and Bruner, were as one voice in recognizing and promoting the importance of play and physical activity for health and child development. Their views were echoed throughout the 20th century by growing numbers of research scientists and professional organizations. Indeed, the evidence supporting the benefits of play is perhaps unparalleled in any other dimension of child development research. From a research perspective, the argument is essentially over, yet political priorities, and school, recreation and family practices, are increasingly isolating children from free, spontaneous, creative outdoor play.

Brevity allows only a cursory sampling of the thousands of research reports supporting the importance of children's spontaneous outdoor play. The selection of position papers and research by leading professional organizations and extensive research reviews referenced here set the stage for corrective action and more intensive study and introspection.

The American Academy of Pediatrics concluded in 2006 in a clinical report, "The Importance of Play in Promoting Healthy Child Development and Maintaining Strong Parent-Child Bonds" by K.R. Ginsberg, that play is essential for cognitive, social and emotional development, health and well-being of children. They attribute the reduction of outdoor play and recess to hurried lifestyles, changes in family structure and increased emphasis on academics.

A 2007 Stanford University Prevention Research Center report, "Building 'Generation Play': Addressing the Crisis of Inactivity Among America's Children," noted that inactivity among children may result in this generation being the first in American history to have a shorter life span than their parents. The report cites extensive evidence that science has sufficiently demonstrated the positive effects of physical activity in preventing obesity and promoting health. A fundamental requirement for healthy child development is ensuring that children have regular recess and physical education at school and outdoor play at home.

The AAP analysis of research, among other major investigations, shows that play is important for children's healthy brain development, creativity, exploration, practicing adult roles, developing multiple competencies, handling challenges, working in groups, decision making, developing leadership skills, developing physical skills, and engaging fully and joyfully in childhood imagination and passion. The Stanford study and a 2006 American Heart Association review of physical activity intervention studies ("What We Know and What We Need to Know: A Scientific Statement from the American Heart Association Council on Nutrition, Physical Activity, and Metabolism" by B.H. Marcus, et al) support the AAP findings and identify other benefits of structured and unstructured play, including the prevention of obesity, high blood pressure, high cholesterol, type 2 diabetes and heart disease, resulting in increased life expectancy. These and other studies support the need to couple physical activity and healthy diets. Obese children and inactive children tend to become

obese, inactive adults, so the time to start preventive measures is early.

The research reviews noted here demonstrate that structured and unstructured play also are essential for academic achievement, helping to ensure social, emotional, physical and cognitive development through the development of pre-concepts essential for success in the three R's. Play does not steal from reading, 'riting and 'rithmetic, but builds the developmental groundwork for its success. Einstein referred to play as the "highest form of research." This is consistent with research from the New Policy Institute by Cole-Hamilton et al, "The Value of Children's Play and Provision: A Systematic Review of the Literature," showing that unstructured play sharpens exploration, tests boundaries and develops both specific and general mindset toward solving problems. Play serves to support and consolidate learning from academics, and establishes pathways and contexts for friendships and peer networks. Amazingly, this happens in a framework of multiple other developmental benefits noted throughout this article.

Play is not merely important, but is essential for healthy child development. The solutions for the "sedentary generation" are neither complex nor profound.

They include:

- Substituting active play for sedentary time.
- Restoring daily 30-minute recess and physical education periods to school days.
- Providing safe playgrounds and recreational opportunities.
- Training and providing skilled, supportive play leaders for community parks and neighborhoods.
- Encouraging parents to be role models.
- Changing dietary patterns at home and at school.
- Educating policy makers, recreation and education professionals, and parents about the profound benefits of play.

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Dr. Joe Frost is the Parker Centennial Professor Emeritus at the University of Texas at Austin, and is often called the contemporary father of play advocacy. Frost serves as an advisory board member for IPEMA's Voice of Play Initiative.

Tom Norquist is president of the International Playground Equipment Manufacturer's Association (IPEMA) and senior vice president of Gametime.
For more information on IPEMA, visit www.ipema.org.

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Program Grants Aid Local Efforts

Strategic partnerships add value and financial support to improve health and livability

Embarking down new territory takes commitment to achieving the end result and faith in achieving set objectives. Saint Paul (MN) Parks and Recreation has been an eager partner willing to carve new territories for public park and recreation's role in advancing healthy communities.

Sājai Wise Kids™

Saint Paul Parks and Recreation has partnered with NRPA, the Sājai Foundation and the University of Minnesota to measure the impact of an after school physical activity and nutrition curriculum on K-6 grade students at five sites within the community. The after school wellness program teaches youth through self-directed workbooks, learning activities, and physical activities. The goal of the program is to reach children in a high contact venue with wellness education messages. An intensive evaluation will be performed by the University of Minnesota to assess the impact of the curriculum. By participating in this pilot project, Saint Paul Parks and Recreation is greatly assisting efforts to fill the void of evaluated after school curriculum for use in park and recreation settings.

Grant Assistance

Saint Paul Parks and Recreation partnered with the Saint Paul School District to utilize a Carol M. White PEP grant in the amount of \$464,126. Saint Paul Parks and Recreation's involvement in the PEP grant includes an assessment for physical skills and nutrition knowledge. In addition Saint Paul Parks and Recreation received a grant from Blue Cross Blue Shield that allowed the department to assign a full-time staff person to work on incorporating active living into Saint Paul's comprehensive plan. They will also be working with Ramsey County Parks and Recreation and many other community partners to incorporate active living into the comprehensive plan.

Get Fit Twin Cities

Minneapolis Mayor R.T. Rybak and Saint Paul Mayor Chris Coleman are joining forces to challenge Twin cities residents to become the fittest region in the nation. Saint Paul Parks and Recreation is a major partner in the program. Get Fit Twin Cities is the area's first ever team-based fitness challenge, which encourages families, coworkers and friends throughout Minneapolis and Saint Paul to form exercise or weight-loss teams. Get Fit Twin Cities runs January through May 2007. Teams of adults register then spend the next four months motivating and supporting each other to move more and eat better. Team captains receive a Captain's Handbook and every team member receives a wristband and Get Fit Passport. All teams that track their progress online are eligible for incentives and prizes.

Agency contact:

Kathy Korum, Recreation Services Manager, kathy.korum@ci.stpaul.mn.us

NRPA PERFORMANCE EXCELLENCE RATING: Key Factors for Success



People

Elected officials, internal staff



Partnerships

School district, non-profits, university



Programs & Services

Physical activity challenge



Public Visibility

PSA, press releases



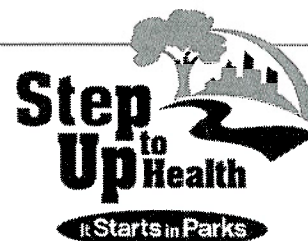
Policies & Practices

Healthy snacks



Performance Measures

Curriculum impact evaluation



NATIONAL RECREATION AND PARK ASSOCIATION

Visit: www.nrpa.org/health



NRPA STEP UP TO HEALTH 2006



Programs – Promotion – Partnerships

Strategic program enhancements and partnerships support a healthy community

Programming improvements need not be costly or intricate, but need to be specific and intentional to impact health of participants. Significant enhancements made to Gainesville (GA) Parks and Recreation summer day camp increased children's physical activity opportunities.

Program Enhancements

For the past two summers, Gainesville Parks and Recreation has made significant efforts to educate children on physical activity benefits and to increase their opportunity to be active in the summer day camp program. In 2005, over 200 children signed a Healthy Lifestyle Pledge and a partnership with the local Department of Public Health resulted in added hours of physical activity and nutrition classes. In 2006, they increased efforts by training day camp staff on the importance of incorporating fun activities that kept children active. Summer day camp children also had the opportunity to swim during the week and took frequent hikes to Georgia State Parks. As a result, at least 30 of the 50 hours per week spent at the summer camp program were spent being active.



Parents were also encouraged to send healthy snacks and were provided a list of options to consider in a Parent Handbook. Gainesville Parks and Recreation partnered with the Longstreet Clinic, a large local multi-practice medical clinic, to provide useful information for parents on how to keep children healthy and safe in weekly camp newsletters. In 2006 a total of 300 children participated in the summer day program.

As an active partner in Governor Perdue's Live Healthy Georgia, Be Active Campaign, Gainesville Parks and Recreation hosted one of several community Walk-A-Mile Events around the state in July 2006. As an expansion of the summer day camp program, every child enrolled and camp staff participated in the walk.



Mutually Beneficial Partnership

One of Gainesville Parks and Recreation most significant partners is the Gainesville City School System. This partnership allows the agency to reach all local public school children to promote programming. In addition, the school system and Gainesville Parks and Recreation joined together to purchase land and share site costs on property that will house a state-of-the-art aquatics facility, community center, and Middle School.

Healthy Choices Pilot Project

Gainesville Parks and Recreation has been chosen as one of 13 pilot sites for a project coordinated by the Georgia Recreation and Park Association in collaboration with the Georgia Division of Public Health, Initiative on Nutrition and Physical Activity. The pilot will examine strategies to educate the public and introduce more healthy food choices in vending machines and concession stands within the department.

Agency contact: Julie Butler, Marketing Coordinator, jbutler@gainesville.org

NRPA PERFORMANCE EXCELLENCE RATING: Key Factors for Success

- P1 People**
Internal staff
- P2 Partnerships**
School system, statewide campaign
- P3 Programs & Services**
Adding more physical activity opportunities

- P4 Public Visibility**
Local radio and TV ads, print articles
- P5 Places & Spaces**
Facility enhancements
- P6 Policies & Practices**
Healthy vending and concessions pilot project



NATIONAL RECREATION AND PARK ASSOCIATION
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Improving Programs and Places for Play to Serve All Cultures

Working to expand programs to older adults and upgrading facilities allow for more physical activity in the community

Partnering with elected officials and community groups expands the ability to better serve the health of the community by improving the environment and providing services that expand physical activity opportunities.

Park Improvements

The Lincoln Square Recreation Center, part of Oakland (CA) Parks and Recreation, has been fully supported by City Council Member Patricia Kernighan (District II) who along with the NBA's Golden State Warriors, have worked to resurface a playground and install three basketball courts. Councilmember Kernighan was also instrumental in the renovation of the Wa Sung Community Service Club Children's Play Area that features a replica of a Chinese Junk Boat with ADA accessibility. Councilmember Kernighan also funded the parks Master Plan that allows the Recreation Center to envision and plan for the future development of the park which will include the addition of an artificial turf field.

Community Partners Expand Services

The Chinese American Citizens Alliance (CACA) and the Chinese Speaking Citizens Academy Alumni (CSCAA) have been Lincoln Square Recreation Center's link to the adult and senior community. The CSCAA group works with agencies such as the Recreation Center, to provide more services to the community. The combined input has helped identify a population which lacked services and adequate fitness opportunities.

With the help of the CSCAA and CACA, Lincoln Square Recreation Center was able to identify that seniors and older adults (age 50+) did not have opportunities within the community to be active. They have added 22 additional hours of gymnasium time for Tai Chi, dance, and table tennis. Overall, facility operating hours have gone from a modest 30 hours a week to 61 hours a week, with participation increasing over ten-fold! The CACA recruited a member to teach a line dancing class and it has blossomed into a successful program with over 125 dancers each night. Table tennis was the other sport participants were interested in and they now have nearly 500 registered participants.

Physical Activities Increase

Partnerships have greatly increased the ability of Lincoln Square Recreation Center to provide services to the community. In the past three years, the number of school age children that use the recreation center and playground has doubled from 600 to over 1,200. Lincoln Square Recreation Center currently schedules recess, lunch breaks, and physical education programs so there is minimal overlap and maximum use of play-time. During the school year, they host a variety of fitness and sports events such as track meets, the Presidents Council on Physical Fitness Challenge, and school-wide physical fitness standardized testing.

Lincoln Square Recreation Center partnered with a local health services agency in 2006 to provide physical activities for children who typically spend the entire summer with their grandparents. By waiving activity fees, these families allowed their children to participate in activities such as baseball, tee-ball, gardening, table tennis, badminton, and nutrition classes.

Agency contact:

Gilbert Gong, Recreation Center Director, ggong@oaklandnet.com

NRPA PERFORMANCE EXCELLENCE RATING: Key Factors for Success



People
Elected officials



Partnerships
Chinese American organizations



Programs & Services
Expanded for more physical activity



Public Visibility
TV stations, newspapers



Places & Spaces
Renovated playgrounds, courts, etc.



Policies & Practices
Mandated physical activity in after school programs



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Public, Private, Non-Profit Partnerships

Strategic partnerships bring countless benefits to the community

The ability for strategic partners to assist in improving the health of a community are expansive and can be an opportune time to emphasize a partner's strengths while supporting an agency's goals and objectives.



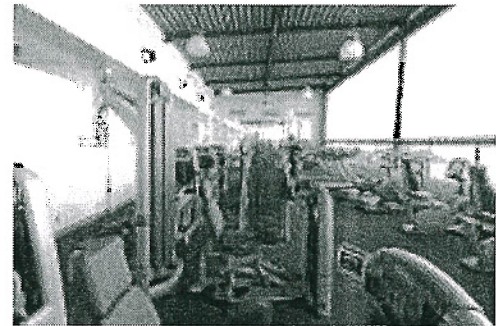
School District Partnership

Scottsdale (AZ) Parks and Recreation has a long-standing unique relationship with the Scottsdale Unified School District. A Master Agreement allows reciprocal use so that high schools built without swimming pools can use the public pools for high school swim and dive teams in return, the City can use school facilities for after school programs, summer programs, and outdoor field use thus benefiting both parties involved.

In order to facilitate safe school fields for the community, the City recently extended its partnership with the School District by supplementing the District's budget to hire a field maintenance crew and purchase equipment to properly maintain the school fields. This citizen driven initiative has resulted in better maintained, safer, more aesthetically pleasing sports fields for the community.

Facility Improvements and Community Assessment

The new \$14.2 million aquatic and fitness facility which was built by the City and opened January 2006, is a perfect example of the partnership. Scottsdale Healthcare donated state-of-the-art cardiovascular and weight equipment and is helping residents design individualized workouts, as well as offering health and fitness classes at the facility. Each piece of equipment is integrated with a medical wellness component which acts as a virtual trainer by recording information that is uploaded to Scottsdale Healthcare professionals who track fitness levels and can communicate with users by e-mail.



Since 2003, Scottsdale Healthcare has performed an annual Community Health Assessment by surveying Scottsdale residents. Scottsdale Parks and Recreation staff utilize the results to determine the community's needs for programs and classes as well as budget justification. Since the start of the community health assessment, the percentage of obesity in the city has gone down incrementally each year. The results of the 2003 survey showed that 54% of adults in Scottsdale were obese or overweight. The 2004 survey showed that 48% were obese or overweight, representing a 6% drop. The City hopes that by increasing programming to meet the community's needs, that there will be a consistent decrease in obesity in the City year after year.

Community-Wide Outreach Effort

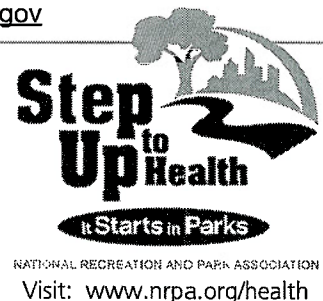
Scottsdale Parks and Recreation is taking an active role in a communitywide effort to market all that Scottsdale has to offer in the way of community health and wellness. "It's Easy to be Healthy in Scottsdale" is a collaborative effort in conjunction with the *Arizona Republic* newspaper, the Scottsdale Convention and Visitors Bureau, Scottsdale Healthcare, Scottsdale Unified School District, the Scottsdale Chamber of Commerce and others throughout the community. The effort is in its early stages and the anticipated results include a community website, corporate wellness programs, and increased communications among all agencies regarding improving community health.

Agency contact: Leslie Clark, Parks and Recreation Manager, lclark@scottsdaleaz.gov

NRPA PERFORMANCE EXCELLENCE RATING: Key Factors for Success

- P2 Partnerships**
School district, healthcare
- P3 Programs & Services**
Educating healthy lifestyle choices
- P4 Public Visibility**
Electronic bulletin, centralized marketing

- P5 Places & Spaces**
Facility enhancements
- P6 Policies & Practices**
Employee wellness policies
- P7 Performance Measures**
Annual community health assessment





Parks Upgraded to Promote Active Use

Small and large improvements to facilities, parks, and pathways increase active participation

Parks are existing places a community can utilize to engage in physical activity. Communities should be encouraged to consistently assess outdoor spaces and look for minor modifications that can have a tremendous effect on usability and the health of a community.



Upgraded Parks and Expanding Services

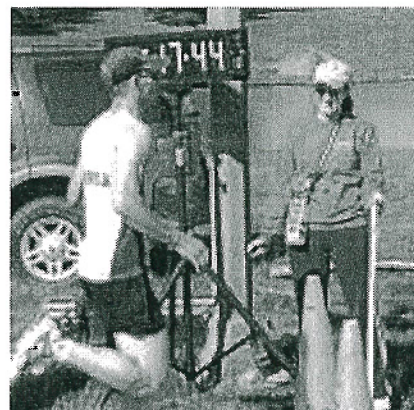
In reviewing their ability to serve the community, Vernon Hills (IL) Park District recognized the Fitness Center wasn't providing sufficient services and chose to expand hours of operation to better serve the community. They also partnered with the Village of Vernon Hills to enhance one of the community parks to include new basketball courts and expanded pathway lighting. This is part of a project to develop a permanent site for the Summer Celebration in Century Park.

A new residential subdivision lacked significant play space for the surrounding community. Area homeowners were invited to take part in a survey to determine how best to develop the park space that resulted in a new playground being constructed to meet their specific needs. Additionally

two full-time staff have become Certified Playground Safety Inspectors in order to efficiently verify the safety and playability of playground equipment.

In an effort to reach the challenging teenage population, the district upgraded and expanded the Vernon Hills Park District Skate Park. The Skate Park was originally constructed in September 1998 and was entirely built from custom made wooden skate board ramps. The Park District has purchased commercially made skate park equipment to replace the older wooden pieces. The new equipment will be phased in over a two year period and will be completed in 2007. This gives youth a controlled, safe environment where they can be constructive and benefit from physical activity.

Extended service hours, new basketball courts, expanded pathway lighting, new playground and an improved skate park will all contribute to Vernon Hills Park District's ability to offer a variety of places and spaces where residents can participate in an active lifestyle.



Public Information

In addition to extensive park improvements, Vernon Hills Park District has also expanded their public visibility efforts to better inform the public about the healthy options available to them. The local Village of Vernon Hills cable channel has broadcast a Park Place video program, which was completely focused on the fitness facility and the benefits of health and fitness. The video was created with the support of full-time staff, aerobics instructors, and members of the facility. In addition the Park District introduced a new quarterly fitness newsletter for members and includes health and nutrition information including healthy recipes, fitness trivia, motivational quotations, and new program information.

Agency contact: Tom Ritter, Superintendent of Recreation, tomr@vhparkdistrict.org

NRPA PERFORMANCE EXCELLENCE RATING: Key Factors for Success



People
Internal staff



Partnerships
Schools



Programs & Services
Expanded fitness classes



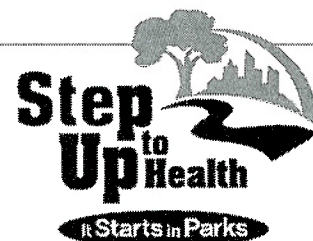
Public Visibility
Local cable TV station, newsletter, website, brochures



Places & Spaces
Park improvements



Policies & Practices
Healthy vending



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**“Building ‘Generation Play’:
Addressing the Crisis of Inactivity Among America’s Children”**
Stanford University School of Medicine, Stanford Prevention Research Center
February 2007

The study provided specific recommendations to address the lack of activity among children for home, schools, mass media, healthcare, industry, communities and government. Excerpt from recommendations for government, pages 50-51:

- Pass laws that will provide adequate incentives, and adequate funding, for schools, industry, and the community to promote multi-sectoral efforts to increase childhood physical activity.
- Issue recommendations/requirements to schools regarding the necessity of recess, physical education classes, and health education in schools.
- Allocate appropriate funds to schools so that they will be able to improve existing physical education and health education programs, which would include providing more staff development.
- Allocate resources for the restructuring of current urban design and for new development that would encourage walking and biking.
- Allocate funding for communities to set aside land for public open space and for the creation of safe playgrounds and recreation centers.
- Sponsor well-designed mass media campaigns that promote the full range of benefits derived from physical activity – not just improved health – to children and adolescents in a culturally sensitive way. Most children and adolescents are not motivated by “better health” messages.
- Sponsor well-designed mass media campaigns that emphasize to parents the importance of encouraging their children to be physically active.
- Hire marketing firms as consultants to use social marketing techniques that encourage physical activity and which present physical activity as fun.
- Develop/fund national databases that accurately measure various types and levels of physical activity in children and adolescents and systemically monitor their longitudinal changes, so that trends can be documented and the impact of youth physical activity can be demonstrated. Ideally, such a database will also include measurement and evaluation of health and social outcomes.
- Fund national studies that evaluate the efficacy of interventions designed to reduce inactivity and promote physical activity among children and adolescents.
- Sponsor the development of tools to evaluate the health-related benefits of participation in sports and recreation programs offered within the community and tools to document the use of parks for youth-oriented physical activities (both organized and ‘free play’). Separately, such tools can be used to evaluate the impact of media on participation levels.