
Summer Fun in Wichita, Kansas¹

Presenter:

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Background

Wichita, Kansas, is a city of approximately 289,000 residents with a median wage of \$17,214 and a minority population of over 18%. In 1991, neighbors living in an area bordering McAdams Park Recreation Center (50% below the poverty level; 31% of residents below age 17) began a campaign to reduce violence and crime committed by gangs and young teens in areas surrounding the park. This campaign led to other surrounding neighborhoods becoming interested, and it encouraged the formulation of the Northeast Task Force with representatives from neighborhood associations, church groups, nonprofit organizations, and interested community residents. Representatives approached the director of park and recreation for assistance and the department agreed to develop a plan of action to reduce crime and violence using recreation staff, innovative programming, collaborative efforts, and existing resources. The vision was to develop an expanded recreation program which would provide youth ages 6-15 a positive recreation and educational experience, while at the same time offering parents a safe and secure environment for their children.

Program Description

Program objectives are to:

- (1) provide Northeast area youth with positive alternatives to gangs, drugs, and violence;
- (2) develop collaborative efforts between public

and private agencies to facilitate financial support and volunteer staffing; and

- (3) establish a program that is affordable and accessible to all who desire to participate.

Partners

Collaborative efforts were established with several organizations including Project Freedom, a coalition made up of over 700 public agencies, nonprofit organizations, and commercial businesses interested in finding solutions to drug and alcohol and violence problems in the community; Unified School District 259; Summer Youth Academy; McAdams Park and Recreation staff; McAdams Park Swimming Pool staff; Northeast Task Force; neighborhood volunteers; and the Wichita Department of Park and Recreation administrative staff.

Program Planning

A pilot program (Summer Fun) was developed and implemented in 1992. This program consisted of recreation opportunities that were not available at other recreation centers operated by the Department of Parks and Recreation. The Summer Fun program provided recreational and educational opportunities from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. Monday through Friday with transportation provided to and from the recreation center from area school locations. Bus schedules were set up so participants had the option of either transportation to the center, breakfast, the morning program, and transportation back to its pickup site; or transportation to the center, lunch, afternoon

¹ Material is taken edited by Witt, P.A., & Crompton, J.L. (Eds.). (1996). *Recreation programs that work for at-risk youth: The challenge of shaping the future*. State College, PA: Venture Publishing, Inc.

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program, and return to pickup site. The summer schedule is shown in Exhibit 21A. In addition to regular center programming, open swimming was provided at the neighborhood pool.

An annual Summer Youth Academy for 12- to 15-year-olds was housed in a school directly across from McAdams Park. This was a program for elite students because demand for the program exceeded the number of youth who could be served. The students engaged in academic work in the mornings; however, in the afternoon some were selected to assist as tutors, mentors and junior supervisors with the Summer Fun program.

The Summer Fun program was a success based on daily attendance totals. Satisfaction with the program was expressed at community and city council meetings. Perhaps the most outstanding illustration of its success was the council's decision to provide an additional \$100,000 to make this a totally free program.

The second year, 1993, the program was made available to other low-income areas where residents expressed concern that the same programming options were not available in their neighborhoods. In response, the department developed recreation and educational programming at three additional sites: Aley/Stamley Community Center (8% below poverty level), Colvin Community Center (43%), and

Evergreen Recreation Center (16%). Program sites were selected because of the large Hispanic population in the Evergreen area and the large Asian population at Colvin. McAdams was targeted because of the African-American population, and Aley/Stamley was selected because of the number of low-income individuals in the immediate area of the community center. All program sites were in areas which had problems with neighborhood crime and gang violence and experienced the same problems that had led to the development of the original McAdams Park community program.

In 1994 the Council again allocated \$100,000 for the program. The budget for the Colvin Community Center is shown in Exhibit 21B. This is typical of the budgets at the other three parks.

Daily attendance was monitored at each Summer Fun site. Aley/Stamley averaged 180; Colvin 300; Evergreen 175; and McAdams 375 per day throughout the eight-week program. Breakfasts and lunches, funded by the USDA summer lunch and breakfast program, were available to participants.

Program Outcomes

The Summer Fun program has been successful at each of the sites. The residents are pleased to have activities in the parks in their neighborhoods.

Exhibit 21A

Example of Summer Program Schedule

Aley/Stamley Summer Fun Program
June 13-August 5, 1994

Morning Schedule:

8:00 - 9:00 a.m.	Bus route to Aley/Stamley
8:00 - 9:00 a.m.	Breakfast Program
9:00 - 9:10 a.m.	General Assembly/divide into activity groups
9:10 - 10:00 a.m.	Swim Lessons
10:00 - 11:00 a.m.	Swim Lessons
11:00 - 12 noon	Swim Lessons
9:10 - 12 noon	Choose any scheduled activity (e.g., Ceramics, Archery, Craft -A-Week, Stained Glass)

Afternoon Schedule:

12 noon - 1:00 p.m.	Bus route to and from Aley/Stamley
12 noon - 1:00 p.m.	Lunch Program
1:00 - 1:10 p.m.	General Assembly/divide into activity groups
1:10 - 4:00 p.m.	Choose any scheduled activity (e.g., Video Movie; Archery; Nintendo; Basketball/Soccer; Swimming)
4:00 - 5:00 p.m.	Bus route from Aley/Stamley to Franklin, Payne, McCormick, Harry Street and Woodman.
	Program Ends.

Exhibit 21B**Budget for Colvin Community Center**

1994 Summer Fun Program Proposed Costs:

Part-Time Wages	
12 Recreation Leaders	\$17,400
3 Swim Leaders (Lessons)	1,800
1 Swim Leader (Open Swim)	200
Employee Benefits (.1175)	2,256
Bus Transportation	5,000
Video Rental	50
Commodities (Games and Equipment)	1,100
Assorted Craft Supplies	<u>1,500</u>
	\$29,306

Wichita Police Department reported that progress was made in providing positive alternatives to gangs, drugs, and violence. Their crime analysis summaries showed a reduction in arrests for youth ages 6-15 in three of the four areas where Summer Fun programming was provided. During the June 13 to August 15 time period, Aley/Stanley had 11 arrests in 1993 compared to 4 in 1994. Evergreen had 8 arrests in 1993 and 4 in 1994. McAdams, which has been influenced by this program since 1991, showed 3 arrests in 1993 and none in 1994. On the other hand, in Colvin, 7 arrests were made in 1993 and 12 in 1994. Thus, greater efforts need to be made in this area. Expansion of the program is planned in future years.

Many collaborative partnerships supporting the program have been established. Local churches have requested parks and recreation department assistance in providing activities for their youth groups. Several of these programs have been initiated as a direct result of the success of the Summer Fun program.