



The Maryland-National Capital
Park and Planning Commission

YOUTH ACTION PLAN



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April 2008

From the Director:

The Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission's (M-NCPPC) Department of Parks and Recreation *Youth Action Plan* contains strategies to promote youth development as a means to improve outcomes for youth. We are shifting the emphasis from problems and problem reduction to assets and strength-based ways to enhance opportunities and supports for all youth and their families. The *Youth Action Plan* includes specific objectives and action steps to mobilize Prince George's County around youth development, and will guide our actions in years to come.

Our programs in the Department of Parks and Recreation offer young people recreation activities and facilities that enrich and enhance their physical health and well being, as well as their mental and social development. Young people from ages 10 to 17 need opportunities to take leadership roles and have a voice in the issues that affect them. In this *Youth Action Plan*, we are investing in new opportunities for our youth to assume meaningful roles and become empowered by partnering with adults.

The M-NCPPC Department of Parks and Recreation is one of Prince George's County's largest out-of-school time service providers for youth. We see these young people in settings that are not a classroom . . . where they are with their friends, and away from their parents . . . and where they are spending their free time. The Parks and Recreation environment is a safe and stimulating place where youth establish connections with the community, engage in physical activity, develop skills, enhance their sense of self-discovery, and become resilient. This happens at community centers, in nature centers, during volunteer opportunities, at arts programs, sports activities, summer teen centers and camps, and much more—across the whole range of activities within the Department.

This *Youth Action Plan* features best practices, policies, and methods of current youth development principles. We have armed staff with skills to help young people move along the path to adulthood. And, we want to establish a shared vision among all of the stakeholders in our communities. We share the belief that youth are our greatest priority.

Sincerely,

Ronnie Gathers, Director
Department of Parks and Recreation

Executive Summary

The Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission's (M-NCPPC's), Department of Parks and Recreation in Prince George's County has been at the forefront in creating and implementing programming that responds to community needs and offers young people recreation activities and facilities that enrich and enhance their physical health and well being as well as their mental and social development. As the County evolves, so too must the Department as it strives to deliver exceptional programs and facilities that will attract, retain, and support the diversity of the County's youth. Identified at national, state and local levels is the need to prevent childhood obesity, minimize truancy, and lessen the school dropout rate.

Our role, coupled with other stakeholders, is to develop programs, services, and strategies that reduce and combat damaging behaviors. The Department builds on its successes and continues to grow and challenge youth to be healthy, productive, and civically responsible adults. The Youth Action Plan initiatives frame the following focus areas:

- Promote healthy lifestyles, wellness and the development of lifetime leisure skills;
- Enhance positive and constructive recreation and leisure opportunities for out-of-school and unstructured time;
- Increase youth experiences that protect and steward natural, cultural and historic resources; and
- Develop and strengthen outreach efforts to be inclusive of and accessible to an increasingly diverse population.

We cannot do it alone! The Department has a history of many successful collaborations and partnerships to include Prince George's County Public Schools, volunteer groups, recreation councils, friends groups, and the Prince George's County Boys and Girls Club, Inc., to name a few. We recognize that there are other organizations with different assets and similar goals. Formal partnerships with these groups will strengthen our success. In turn, our efforts must support and complement the good work of other agencies and organizations.

This Youth Action Plan has been developed with input from youth, staff and community members over a 12-month period involving surveys, town hall forums, and workshops. The process has resulted in a shared vision, centered around six objectives, action steps for implementation, performance indicators and evaluation methods. The six objectives are as follows:

- Organization and Program Structure
- Staff Education and Training
- Health and Wellness
- Community Outreach (Collaborations and Partnerships)
- Marketing
- Outcomes and Evaluation Measures

Action steps to achieve each of the six objectives will concentrate in the following areas:

- Design programming to achieve specific outcomes for the benefit of Prince George's County youth
- Increase opportunities for youth participation in decision making regarding Xtreme Teens programs to encourage greater youth participation
- Implement enriching and meaningful activities for youth
- Increase opportunities for youth to establish healthy behaviors to increase wellness, and prevent onset of childhood obesity and other diseases
- Provide a safe and supportive environment for youth participation
- Outreach to form new partnerships with youth stakeholders
- Create opportunities for youth involvement as partners and resources

FOREWORD

Current Reality

Major trends in society are shaping the way park and recreation professionals do business. There are fewer married couples, slower income growth, more single parent households, and an increased number of families living in poverty. In 2001, 38 percent of America's youth lived just above the poverty level, 16 percent lived in poverty, and 7 percent lived in extreme poverty. Over half of our nation's youth can be lumped into a category associated with lower achievement, impaired health, and impaired development (Witt & Caldwell, 2005).

In the late 1970's to the mid 1990's, there was a sharp increase in the divorce rate of American families; the increase in youth living in single parent homes often led to an increase in unsupervised and unstructured time (Bembry, 1998). One result of family and work trends was a growth in "latch-key kids," youth who are home alone during after-school and evening hours. In addition to safety concerns, youth who are home alone are less likely to engage in exercise and outdoor activity. United States Department of Health and Human Services, Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) statistics indicate that 17 percent of teens are obese or at risk for obesity-related disease. In Prince George's County, the percent is disproportionately higher than the national average for diseases like diabetes and hypertension. Two-parent households with both parents working can also result in unsupervised youth. The problem is permeating small towns, urban neighborhoods, and cities nationwide. According to the 2000 U.S. Census, there are nearly 200,000 single parent households in Prince George's County, Maryland, alone, with single parent households tending to have much lower incomes than two parent families. Grandparents, who generally have a limited fixed income, are solely responsible for 10,500 of the County's youth.

According to the CDC, homicide is the second leading cause of death for people ages 10-19. Homicide is the number one cause of death among African Americans ages 15-24 and the second leading cause of death for Hispanic youths. The National Center for Injury Prevention and Control reports that more than 400,000 youth ages 10-19 were injured as a result of violence in the year 2000. In a 2005 Maryland Youth Risk Behavior Survey of high school students in the state

of Maryland, more than 19 percent carried a weapon within the past 30 days and over 14 percent reported being involved in a physical fight during that same time period. The Harvard School of Public Health (Simpson, 2001) indicates that 100,000 youth each year are homeless or runaways without a secure place to stay, and that most teens do not feel valued by the people in their community. Maryland statistics indicate that an alarming 12.4 percent of females attempted suicide in 2005.

An increase in gang recruitment and gang violence is another reason today's youth are at risk. The lure of the illicit economy and the flashy drug kingpin lifestyle that the media sensationalizes is making recruitment easier for gangs and harder for recreation professionals (Howell & Decker, 1999). According to the United States Department of Justice, youth gangs are considered to consist of adolescents and young adults from the ages of 12 to 24. Gang youth are more involved in marijuana and cocaine drug sales and in more serious violent crimes than non-gang youth. The Maryland Youth Risk Behavior Survey indicates that 18.5 percent of Maryland youth currently use marijuana. Gang members are much more likely than others to carry guns on a regular basis. Alarmingly, one-third of gang members said it is okay to shoot someone who disrespected them (Howell & Decker, 1999). Skip parties and drug parties are the newest trend in the gang lifestyles. Teens with working parents are taking advantage of their unsupervised homes to engage in drugs, sex, and other deviant behavior. Gang rapes are often a devastating consequence for females who attend these parties. Some parents do not understand the role of gangs in meeting their children's need for affiliation and belonging.

Research indicates that local, state, and federal governments are aware that drugs, violent crimes, gangs, poverty, obesity, and other dangerous risk behaviors are not just inner city problems (Witt). According to professionals in the field, such as Dr. Peter Witt from Texas A&M University, all youth can be categorized as "at risk youth"; however, some are more exposed than others. For the most part, any child growing up in an American community has the opportunity to experiment with drugs, be physically harmed, engage in sexual activity, or worse. The changing society and changing families have opened the door for youth to have more unsupervised time to participate in unsafe and risky behavior. Each day America's 20 million adolescents decide how they will spend at least five (40 percent) of their waking hours when not in school (Carnegie Council, 1994). In the park and recreation field, intervention programs such as supervised gyms in disadvantaged communities have generated what most think is simplistic funding and management fixes (Connell, Gambo, Smith). Such intervention programs are like putting a

bandage on an open wound; although beneficial, in most cases it is only a temporary cover to a deeper problem. Park and recreation professionals must evolve in the way they develop supports, opportunities, and services; they must develop a new social vision [articulated through strategic planning] based on the understanding of how and why youth are at risk and the contributions park and recreation programs can make in decreasing risk behaviors and their consequences (Godbey, 1997).

Background

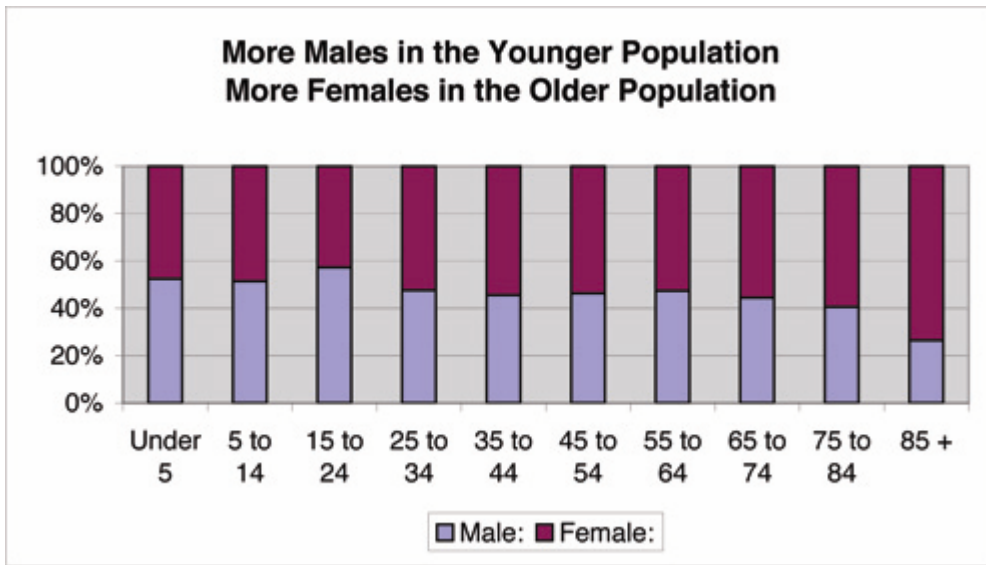
The Department of Parks and Recreation in Prince George's County, Maryland, presents innovative leisure programming for all ages and abilities, and manages a park system of more than 25,000 acres. This encompasses a broad spectrum of facilities, including hundreds of neighborhood parks, community parks, and regional parks; an extensive network of stream valley parks and trails; historic sites; community centers; cultural arts facilities; golf courses, nature centers, aquatic centers, and ice rinks; and natural areas. Specialized facilities and programs include an arena and equestrian center, a stadium, an airport, and a sports and learning complex. The Department conducts thousands of recreation classes and programs each year.

The Department of Parks and Recreation has served the children, teens and families of Prince George's County since M-NCPPC added the recreation function in 1970. For over 30 years, traditional youth programming has included community center drop-in time, teen clubs, classes and workshops, sports leagues and other activities for physical, social and individual growth. In 1995, the Department formed the Teen Task Force in an effort to coordinate teen-specific programs and services within the Department. The Task Force unified the direction of the Department's youth services in 1998 by renaming all weekend teen programs in the community centers Xtreme Teens, programs and by expanding our outcome based programming and staff training. To further this effort, a Youth Coordinator was hired in 2004 to coordinate all Departmental youth services and to develop a strategic youth initiative. Today, the Xtreme Teens program has expanded to serve young people ages 10-17, through a variety of program opportunities and services. The weekend Xtreme Teens program continues to be offered on Fridays and Saturdays at all community centers. Membership is available for a \$15 annual fee.

Demographics

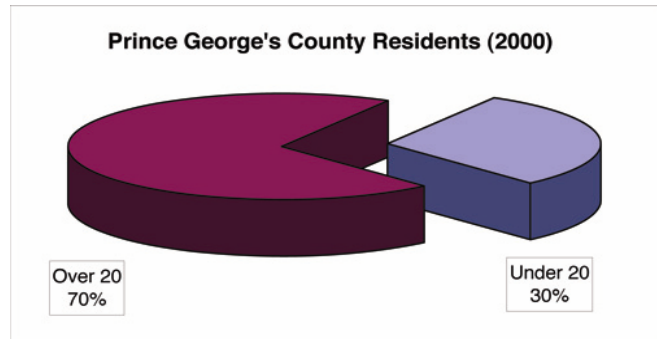
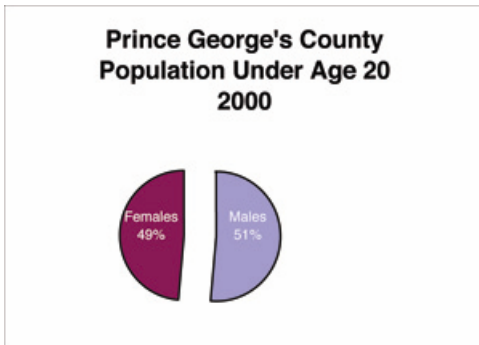
Prince George's County Population Reports

Age Distribution	1990		2000	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Under 5	55,409	7.6%	57,940	7.2%
5 - 24	217,471	29.8%	240,008	29.9%
25 – 64	406,405	55.7%	441,616	55.1%
65 and Older	50,343	6.9%	61,951	7.7%



How many young people do we have?

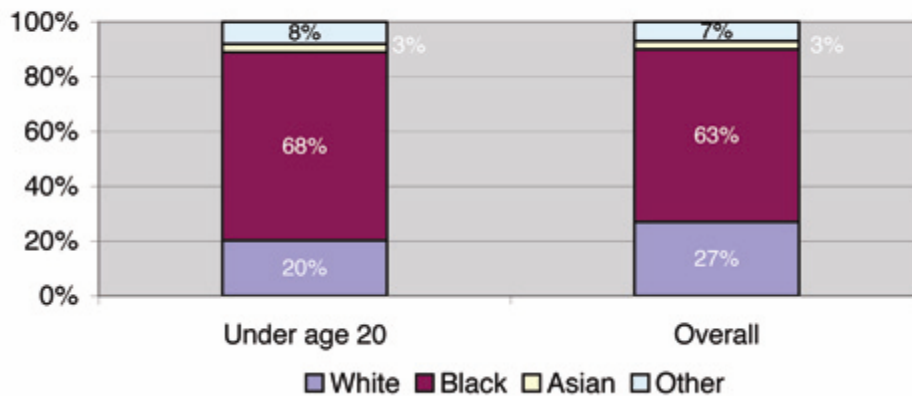
In 2000, there were 240,050 county residents under age 20, or about 30 percent of the population. Males accounted for slightly more than half of the young people in the County. For every 100 females under age 20 there were 106 males; in the remainder of the population there were 87 males for every 100 females. Countywide, male births exceed female births by a ratio of about 105 to 100. However, national statistics indicate that women have longer life expectancies than men, and the male to female ratio declines as a population ages. Thus, in the population 65 and over, there were approximately 70 males per 100 females in Prince George's County.



County racial composition for population under 20

The racial composition of the county residents under 20 years of age closely reflects the racial composition of Prince George’s County overall. The ethnic composition of those under 20 differs from the ethnic composition of the overall population, e.g. Hispanic youth are present in a slightly greater proportion.

County Racial Composition



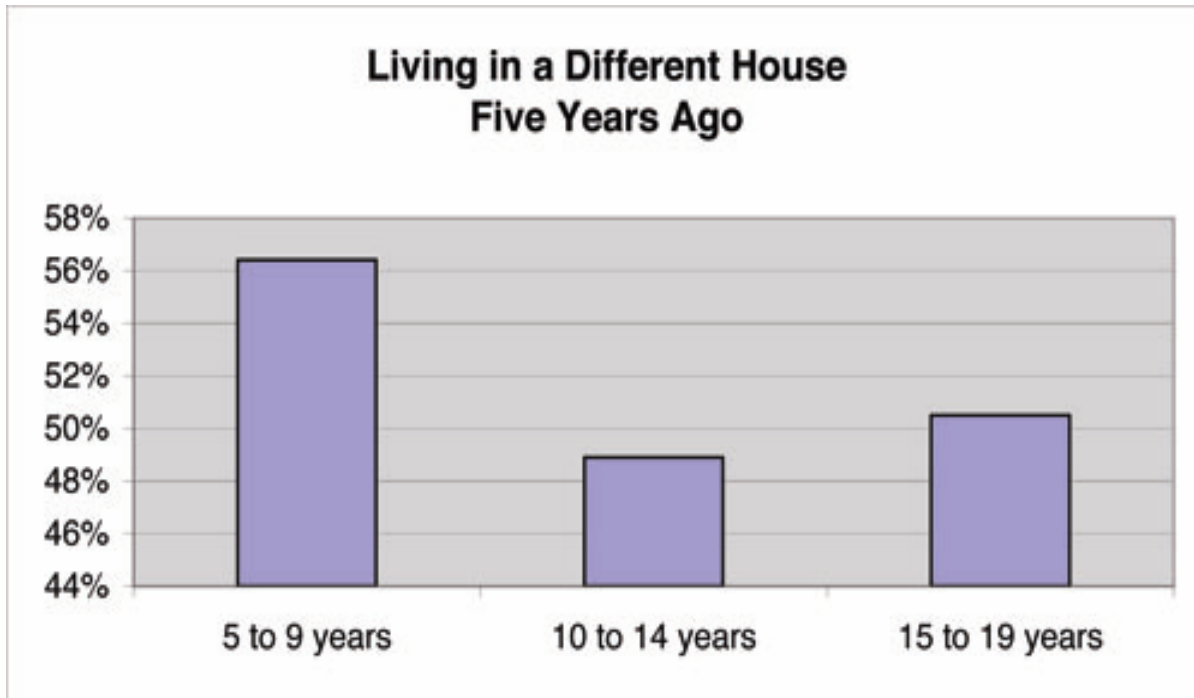
Where are these youth?

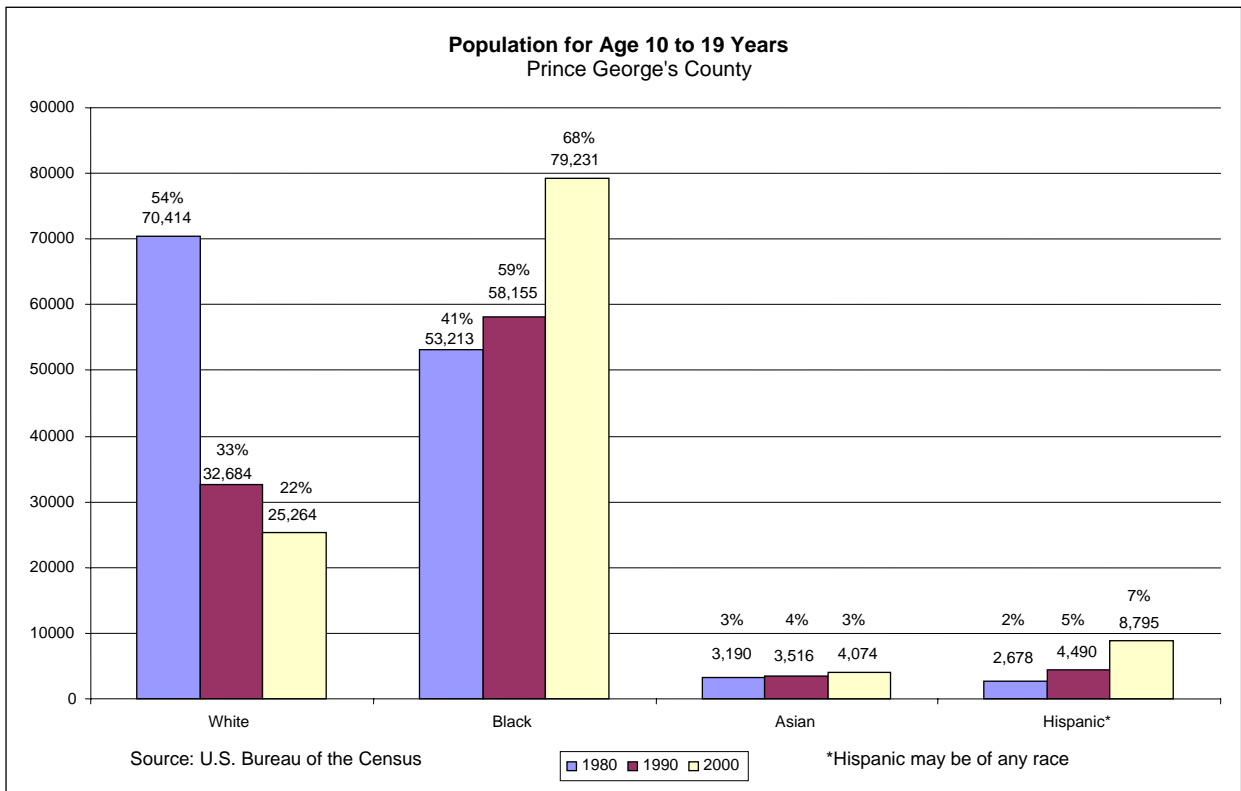
According to the 2000 Census, more than half of residents aged five through 19 years old lived in different house five years earlier. In contrast, only 47 percent of the balance of the population in the County lived in a different house five years earlier.

The percentage of children living in a different house five years earlier is highest for children five to nine years old. This is perhaps indicative of change in residence or housing choice related to children entering the school years.

The number of youth is growing most quickly in these areas:

- Inside the Beltway from Rt. 450 to Pennsylvania Avenue
- Near Andrews Air Force Base
- Between Bowie and Upper Marlboro





Total Prince George's County population ages 10 to 19 has ranged from approximately 130,000 in 1980 to 100,000 in 1998 to 120,000 in 2000. During this 30-year period, there has been a progressive decrease in white population accompanied by a progressive increase in black population. The Asian population has remained relatively steady at about 3 percent. As the result of a progressive increase in Hispanics, that segment of the population is today approaching about 10 percent of the youth population. Hispanics have historically concentrated geographically in the northwestern part of the County. It is anticipated the Hispanics will continue to become a larger proportion of the youth population and that they will become more geographically dispersed throughout the County.

Core Beliefs

- **Youth are valued members of the community and our greatest priority!**
- **Youth development is our business.**
- **The Department of Parks and Recreation partners with families, schools, community groups, and faith based organizations which accept the responsibility to help children grow up to be healthy, caring, and productive.**
- **We believe that our diversity is our strength and we will celebrate cultural uniqueness through our programming.**

The Department of Parks and Recreation has established a solid understanding of youth development principles, which recognize that all youth are at risk of finding places to go and things to do and that this adversely influences their development and future. “Research gives us no reason to fear adolescents—in fact, it shows our negative images of teens to be largely stereotypical and unfair—but it gives us many reasons to fear for them” (Simpson, 2001). Current youth development focuses on developing youth potential and focuses on adolescents as positive contributors to the community. The Department’s adoption of best practices, policies, and methods of current youth development principles through strategic planning will establish a shared vision among stakeholders, and arm Department staff with skill sets to help young people move along the pathway to adulthood.

It is said, “It takes a village to raise a child. It takes a community network to raise a teenager.” The Department’s partnerships with families, schools, community groups, faith based organizations, and individuals increase the number of supports, opportunities, and services offered to the County’s youth resulting in an increased number of adolescents transitioning into positive, pro-active citizens. Sustaining and improving the quality of programs is related to strong principles of diversity and cultural uniqueness that reshape practices. The Department environment is a safe and stimulating place where youth establish connections with the community, engage in physical activity, develop skills, enhance their sense of self-discovery, and become resilient. Program development is guided by the “Ready by 21” framework that provides the expectation that through directed activities, young people will develop to be ready for school, ready for work, and ready for life by age 21.

Rationale

The Department of Parks and Recreation is one of Prince George's County's largest out-of-school time service providers for youth. Recent changes in the demography of Prince George's County intensifies the need for youth services that break through fragmented practices and environmental barriers. Research indicates that seven out of ten youths could be living well, working or attending college, and active in their communities if the basic supports and opportunities are provided (Ready By 21, Forum for Youth Development). Positive relationships with adults formulated through the Department's services, is the single most critical factor in the success of any program. Teens consistently express the desire for competent adult leadership and programs with long-term sustainable results.

The Youth Action Plan is a plan to create and sustain a systems approach to providing youth with accessible and available opportunities which improve their quality of life, increase their chances for achievement, promote their development into responsible citizens and reduce the risk of behavior problems. The Plan has been formulated to provide the Department with a tool to ensure *intentionality*—program success by design. Success by design includes a shared vision, performance indicators, action steps for implementation and evaluation, and reformulation of programs to reflect dynamic communities.

The Youth Action Plan will:

- Target specific outcomes using programs and activities to achieve goals;
- Increase youth resiliency;
- Identify and expand supports, opportunities, and services for youth;
- Establish program knowledge and credibility with external stakeholders;
- Provide an asset enriched and safe environment for youth throughout the Department of Parks and Recreation;
- Develop and broaden opportunities for partnerships with businesses, the faith-based community, governmental agencies, and non-profit organizations;
- Build competency, quality, and sustainability of Department of Parks and Recreation youth workers; and
- Create opportunities for life long participation in leisure activities.

Framework of the Youth Action Plan

- Out-of-School Unstructured Time
- Natural, Cultural and Historical Stewardship
- Healthy Lifestyles and Lifetime Leisure Skills
- Collaborations and Partnerships
- Outreach to Diverse Populations

Out of School Unstructured Time

Youth today spend less time with adults than they did generations before. A number of societal changes have resulted in fewer adults making special connections to youth, yet we know that having the special support of one key adult outside the family is an important asset for any child in protecting them from various problems facing youth.

Spending less time with adults may translate into more time with peers. This change in itself may not be the biggest concern, but rather the fact that the majority of time is unstructured and often unsupervised. All young people need structure and supervision. The structure contributes to feelings of security and belonging. When the time with peers is used to engage youth in various activities, build on their personal or individual assets or contribute to their community and family, the goal of positive youth development is reached. Everyone needs some "down time", but too much unstructured time and too few positively involved adults tends to increase at-risk behaviors and depression among youth.

The increase in first-time marijuana use nationally is likely due to teens having more unsupervised and unstructured time. Research shows that unmonitored teens are four times more likely to use marijuana or engage in other risky behaviors.

“In order to address this problem, teens need to have access to a variety of activities that will interest and engage them during the summer months,” said Kenneth L. Gladish, Ph.D., National Executive Director of the YMCA of the USA. “At their local YMCAs, teens can participate in a wide-range of structured and diverse programs year round that give them the opportunity for positive engagement and allow them to develop character, leadership, and skills to last a lifetime.” As the leading youth service provider in Prince George’s County, the Department,

like the YMCA, offers programs that provide enriching activities during out of school times. Through the Department's after-school programming, summer camps and playgrounds, and weekend teen programs we will continue to provide and promote structured programming, caring adults, and peer interaction supporting positive youth development.

Natural, Cultural and Historical Stewardship

Over the past few decades, the way youth understand and experience nature has changed drastically. Young people's physical contact and intimacy with nature has faded, with a number of negative consequences. For example, a recent study found that 41 percent of children ages 8 to 11 worry about being safe in their neighborhoods. More than 47 million Americans live in homes ruled by condominium, cooperative and homeowners' associations where community covenants exclude private gardens or the free play of children outdoors. A growing body of research has linked young people's mental, physical, and spiritual health to their association with nature. Also, young person's relationship to the outdoors has a direct correlation with their appreciation and support for environmental, cultural, and historical resources as adults. As a result, it is imperative to cultivate more interactive, thoughtful programs to address these needs.

Healthy Lifestyles and Lifetime Leisure Skills

Research studies reflect that the percentage of overweight children in the United States is growing at an alarming rate. Youth are spending less time exercising outdoors and more time indoors in front of the TV, computer, or playing video games. Since the 1980's, the percentage of overweight children and teens has more than tripled. Nationwide, approximately 10 percent of two to five year olds and more that 16 percent of children between the ages of six and 19 are overweight. The Maryland Youth Risk Behavior Survey (2005) states that 27.4 percent of Maryland high school students say they are slightly overweight. The Center for Disease Control study reflects that on a scale of one to five, with five being rated excellent, the health status of Prince George's County residents averages 3.7. As a significant provider of youth leisure services, the Department has the obligation, the resources and the capacity to engage and empower County youth and their families in combating this epidemic. We will embrace, celebrate and accept our responsibility by adopting and implementing a wellness policy that promotes lifetime leisure programs and services supporting active and healthy family lifestyles, nutritional and fitness education, and an accessible and inclusive park system.

Collaborations and Partnerships

The Department of Parks and Recreation cannot do it alone—partnerships are a valuable part of the Youth Action Plan. Defined as cooperative relationships between people or groups who agree to share responsibility for achieving some specific goal, partnerships can support programs or events and offer benefits to all participating partners. While the Department has a history of many successful collaborations and partnerships (including Prince George’s County Public Schools, volunteer groups, recreation councils, friends groups, and the Prince George’s County Boys and Girls Club, Inc.), we recognize that there are other organizations with different assets and resources and similar goals. Formal partnerships with these groups will strengthen our success. In turn, Department of Parks and Recreation efforts must support and complement the good work of other agencies and organizations. Our roles are identifying resources, including duplications or voids, through a community inventory mapping process; bringing parties together with shared goals in our areas of strategic focus; and identifying opportunities for collaboration and partnership

Outreach to Diverse Populations

Prince George’s County is a destination for people of many racial and ethnic backgrounds. In 1990, the foreign born (term defined by the U.S. Census as any legal or non-legal status immigrant) accounted for 10 percent of the population. In 2000, that figure was 14 percent. While it is difficult to predict immigration trends into the future, based on current data, the projected minority/non-minority mix in the Prince George’s County region in the year 2030 is 63 percent minority, and 37 percent non-Hispanic white.

Over the last decade, suburban regions in Maryland have had the largest increases in minority populations, along with the largest declines in non-Hispanic whites. In 2003, 40 percent in the region were from Latin America, followed closely by Asia at 35 percent. Most of the foreign-born populations cluster densely around the I-495 corridor close to, but outside of, Washington, DC, with little dispersion to highly rural areas. Langley Park, Adelphi, and Chillum are home to the largest percentages of immigrants in Prince George’s County. The County also experienced a significant out-migration of existing residents to other areas. This contributed to a growing income inequality in the region with significant numbers of rich and poor, with fewer people in the middle. The foreign born population includes many cultures and points of view on the environment, religion, family and government.

According to the 2000 U.S. Census, 14,443 individuals with disabilities, ages 5 – 20 reside in Prince George’s County. Since 1974, the Department of Parks and Recreation has provided specialized therapeutic recreation programs for individuals with disabilities. In the early 1990s, the Department launched an inclusion initiative to encourage and facilitate the participation of individuals with disabilities throughout the Department’s programs and services. Inclusion specialists provide disability accommodations such as inclusion support staff, use of volunteer companions, adapted equipment, accessible transportation for trips, sign language interpretation, staff trainings on a wide variety of disability topics, and more.

As the County population increases, the numbers of individuals with disabilities continues to rise as well. The demand for specialized programs and inclusion services continues to rise and additional resources will be needed to successfully meet these special community needs.

The Department’s role is to lessen barriers to participation for all residents and bridge these cultural and other differences so that all youth have access to recreation opportunities.

Youth Action Plan

Development of Objectives

The formulation of the Youth Action Plan is a result of feedback gathered from youth, families, community members, and Department of Parks and Recreation staff on the current level of service, program preferences and recommendations for future programming. Teen participants, parents and other youth members of the community participated in town hall forums and contributed their perspective to the contents of this document. Input also was solicited using electronic surveys. Through a series of intensive staff workshops, a group of key staff members contributed to developing the six key objectives and action steps to create a new approach to programming and service delivery.

The following six objectives will frame the Department's service delivery, partnerships and collaboration, and philosophy regarding youth programs and services. This working document will direct the collective efforts of the Department as we provide services that are relevant, comprehensive, and of benefit to all Prince George's County's youth.

Organization and Program Structure

Current Context:

Standards for program structure are contained in the M-NCPPC Comprehensive Recreation Programming Plan working document, adopted in July 2004.

Objective:

To provide a program structure and organizational system that supports positive youth development.

Strategies:

1. Assess the current service delivery system to ensure that youth needs are being met and implement changes based on the results.

Action Step: Inventory all facilities and parks in our system to identify need and space for teen and youth programming.

Action Step: Analyze and recommend to senior management a list of facilities and parks that can support a dedicated teen space.

Action Step: Design and implement teen friendly spaces or venues in designated facilities and properties.

2. Develop and implement programs for youth designed with measurable outcomes.

Action Step: Train staff and adopt a program planning instrument which will help guide youth workers and youth participants in developing outcome-oriented Xtreme Teens programs. (Appendix C)

Action Step: Inform and educate staff about accepted best youth development program planning practices through the Youth Worker Series training.

Action Step: Create opportunities through recreation programming for young people to enhance self-esteem, self-confidence, lifetime leisure skills, and connectedness to community.

Action Step: To provide youth access and exposure to art, cultural, sports, historic and environmental activities within Xtreme Teens

offerings and promote, as the slogan states, “Something for Everyone.”

Action Step: Build youth program opportunities at designated HUB concept pilot programs. HUB programs are designed to be centralized focal points of the community providing extensive outreach, partnerships, community activities and information services.

3. Develop a mechanism for community participation in the youth services programming process.

Action Step: Reformulate the Teen Task Force to be inclusive of all Department of Parks and Recreation divisions’ staff and incorporate youth representatives.

Action Step: Create a Parks and Recreation Teen Leadership Council (TLC) to develop a youth advisory and advocacy voice on programming and policy issues.

Action Step: Recruit and hire Xtreme Teens Ambassadors who will promote Xtreme Teens activities and bring new participation to our programs.

Action Step: Increase opportunities for youth civic engagement through service-learning projects and volunteerism.

Staff Education and Training

Current Context:

The Department has an employee pre-service and continuing education training program that is evaluated, updated, and revised annually. Volunteers are provided training and evaluated on performance.

Objective:

The Department will ensure that career and intermittent employees as well as volunteers are trained in successful youth development practices.

Strategies:

1. Implement training of career and intermittent employees as well as volunteers to increase knowledge and awareness of the youth development process, and to improve the quality and sustainability of the workforce.

Action Step: Develop training that outlines the scope of the youth development process using a series of modules.

Action Step: Identify staff to become qualified facilitators of the Youth Worker Leadership Series Training, and train them as facilitators.

Action Step: Maintain a database of youth workers trained to track the continuing education and development of our youth work force.

Action Step: Seek Continuing Education Units (CEUs) for the Youth Worker Leadership Series Training.

Action Step: Develop a training presentation that outlines the scope and details of the Youth Action Plan.

Action Step: Develop a communication tool to educate and inform staff about youth development and youth services initiative.

Action Step: Develop a staff handbook to include job descriptions, performance evaluation standards, FAQs strategies and policies.

2. Implement measurable outcomes to evaluate the Youth Worker Leadership Series Training.

Action Step: Design an evaluation form, and administer at regular intervals.

Action Step: Use feedback to make training improvements and record quantitative results.

Health and Wellness

Current Context:

Health and wellness is an adopted program area sited in the Comprehensive Recreation Programming Plan. The Department provides a wide variety of programs and services to facilitate the development of healthy lifestyles of a diverse community and workforce.

Objective:

The Department demonstrates its commitment to youth by promoting healthy lifestyles and integrating wellness concepts into all programs and facilities.

Strategies:

1. Promote health and wellness education for Department employees.

Action Step: Train staff to promote and implement the National Recreation and Park Association's *Step Up to Health* program.

Action Step: Implement *Step Up to Health* curriculum in all before, after, and out-of-school programs for youth.

2. Incorporate health and fitness components throughout the Department's youth programs.

Action Step: Expose youth to lifetime leisure skill development through program offerings.

Action Step: Assess existing programs for health and wellness components.

Action Step: Analyze and recommend to senior management steps to ensure that all facilities and programs meet health and wellness criteria.

Action Step: Conduct pre-and post-testing at selected sites to monitor and track participant progress.

- a. Weigh participants before and after the program utilizing the same scale.

- b. Conduct surveys to determine knowledge of nutrition and fitness.
- c. Evaluate changes in cardiovascular and strength fitness through regular testing.

Action Steps: Integrate nutrition education throughout our program offerings.

- 3. Form partnerships to conduct youth programs that promote active, healthy lifestyles and positive development.

Action Step: Explore partnerships with local youth services providers, including the Prince George's County Public Schools, Prince George's County Health Department, Prince George's County Memorial Library System and others committed to healthy lifestyles in the County and state.

Action Step: Conduct Community/Family Health and Wellness Day(s) to provide information on services and programs.

- 4. Promote self-directed use of the park system for unstructured health and wellness benefits.

Action Step: Assess and promote available unstructured health and wellness opportunities within the Department for self-directed participation utilizing the Department's trails, par courses, open spaces, local ball fields and natural areas.

Community Outreach (Collaborations and Partnerships)

Current Context:

The development of youth services requires a commitment to establishing close ties with the community and being responsive to residents' needs. Collaboration with, and participation by, public, commercial, and non-profit entities is necessary to enrich programs and fill gaps.

Objective:

The Department will play an aggressive role in collaborating with governmental, corporate, social, community, and faith-based organizations to coordinate youth development efforts in Prince George's County.

Strategies:

1. Identify the needs of youth in Prince George's County through surveys, focus groups, town hall forums, the Teen Leadership Council and other forms of youth voice.
 - Action Step: Utilize a community inventory mapping process to involve youth in the needs assessment process.
 - Action Step: Continue surveys with established youth groups and partner organizations.
 - Action Step: Train employees to organize focus group discussions and to hold sessions on a regular basis, with compilation and distribution of comments and feedback.
 - Action Step: Establish teen advisory groups to promote programs teen-to-teen.
 - Action Step: Organize annual town hall forum for teens managed by the Teen Leadership Council and supported by the local teen advisory groups.
2. Participate in information sharing with external youth stakeholders to address the needs of youth in Prince George's County.

Action Step: Formalize the Department's relationships with Prince George's County Public Schools and expand collaborative partnerships throughout the County.

Action Step: Proactively participate in countywide committees that support youth development.

Action Step: Seek private and public funding to support collaborative youth programs.

3. Enhance youth outreach to include populations that are underserved.

Action Step: Develop a bi-lingual (English/Spanish), online youth resources directory.

Action Step: Assess needs of unserved and underserved teens in collaboration with the community needs assessment inventory.

Action Step: Develop Xtreme Teens program sites at community partner facilities.

Action Step: Develop new programs and activities based on assessments with teens and partner organizations.

Action Step: Develop outreach efforts/mobile units to provide and promote youth programs.

Action Step: Establish a Teen Ambassadors Outreach Program in all community centers to market Xtreme Teens programs.

Action Step: Develop sponsorship program to support Xtreme Teens membership and programs, and further develop partnerships.

Action Step: Define and implement specific measures to evaluate community outreach efforts.

Marketing

Current Context:

The Department currently has a written marketing plan, including a research component, which is evaluated annually.

Objective:

The Department will establish an effective marketing strategy that will ensure that youth, parents and other stakeholders are aware of programs, facilities, services and the benefits of participation.

Strategies:

1. Develop a comprehensive marketing plan for youth initiatives.

Action Step: Use the Public Affairs and Marketing Office template.

2. Educate intermittent and career staff on the programs and facilities available to our youth and teens.

Action Step: Create a comprehensive quick reference guide for all Department of Parks and Recreation intermittent and career staff to educate them on the programs and facilities available to our youth and teens.

3. Define and implement specific measures to evaluate marketing efforts for youth initiatives.

Action Step: Create a subcommittee for the Teen Task Force to assist with marketing the Department's youth services, in alignment with the overall Department Marketing Plan.

Action Step: Identify annual marketing objectives educating the community about the Department's programs and services for teens, increase participation, and obtain feedback from participants to improve communication and programs/services.

Action Step: List the target audiences, with very specific demographic identifiers, and develop specific information geared to particular audiences.

- Action Step: Develop a position statement indicating how the Department's youth program fits into the overall community and other teen programs in the local environment.
- Action Step: Add value to Xtreme Teens membership through discounts with Parks and Recreation facilities and partnering businesses and organizations in the community.
- Action Step: Develop marketing strategies and the marketing matrix, including use of purchased advertising.
- Action Step: Redesign the Xtreme Teens website to update its “look” and make the information more inviting and accessible.
- Action Step: Develop an annual marketing budget and schedule for community relations exhibits and event appearances, advertising, and collateral materials.

Outcomes and Evaluation Measures

Current Context:

Programs are systematically evaluated to assess outcomes and the operational efficiency and effectiveness of the Department.

Objective:

The Department will implement a timely evaluation process that will identify the benefits of participation, customer satisfaction and program efficiency.

Strategies:

1. Provide outcome-oriented youth programs with regular and systematic evaluation.

Action Step: Develop program standards for Xtreme Teens programs.

Action Step: Implement evaluation processes that allow youth workers and youth to evaluate and provide program, facility and service outcomes.

Action Step: Provide training on evaluation methods as part of staff training curriculum to include: performance measure development, pre-program, mid-point and post-program assessments, tracking and monitoring tools, surveys, focused conversation method, and data presentation and analysis.

2. Use evaluations to make decisions on organizational and program structure, program marketing, customer service, and staff training.

Action Step: Update this Action Plan to reflect decisions guided or informed by evaluation results.

Action Step: Evaluate Youth Program Marketing:

a. Quantitative: Use “How did you find out?” and “How would you like to receive information?”
(*survey questions*)

b. Qualitative: Use “How did you find out?” and “How would you like to receive information?” (*questions for*

focused conversations with program participants, staff, teen leaders/role-models, etc.)

Action Step: Evaluate Youth Customer Service (satisfaction):

- a. Quantitative: Surveys following program.
- b. Qualitative: Focused conversations with program participants, staff and teen leaders following activity.

Action Step: Evaluate Organization and Program Structure:

- a. Develop an observation team checklist as a universal tool to ensure consistency and quality control.
- b. Random site visits by observation teams (made up of staff members from each Division who are also members of the Teen Task Force).

3. Celebrate progress and share success.

Action Step: Use local media and the Department of Parks and Recreation website to promote youth initiatives and share success.

Action Step: Engage teen leaders and role models in regular and ongoing dialogue on the content and performance of youth initiatives.

Action Step: Create program profiles and performance measures to justify and support grant funding and attract sponsors.

Action Step: Issue “youth action” annual reports that summarize initiatives, report performance and highlight success.

Performance Indicators

1. To provide a program structure and organizational system that enables youth to develop into healthy, caring, and responsible adults.

Performance Measure: Percent of youth workers trained to use program-planning tool.

2. The Department will ensure that its career employees, intermittent staff, and volunteers are knowledgeable about best practices regarding youth development through in-service education and training.

Performance Measure: Percent of staff qualified as youth development trainers.

3. The Department is committed to promoting healthy lifestyles for youth by offering creative programs and services and integrating wellness concepts into programs and facilities.

Performance Measure: Percent of facilities that meet health and wellness criteria.

4. The Department will establish a proactive role in collaborating with governmental, corporate, social, community and faith-based organizations to coordinate youth development efforts in Prince George's County.

Performance Measure: Percent of programs with a community partner or sponsor.

5. The Department will establish an effective marketing strategy that will ensure that youth, parents and other stakeholders are aware of programs, facilities, services and the benefits of participation.

Performance Measure: Percent of teens aware of Departmental programs, services, and facilities.

6. The Department will implement a timely evaluation process that will identify the benefits of participation, customer satisfaction and program efficiency.

Performance Measure: Percent of teen programs that are regularly evaluated.

Reporting on Youth Action Plan Success

As outlined, each of the Department's divisions will measure, evaluate and report progress in implementing the Youth Action Plan. Internal reporting mechanisms will include:

- Staff Teen Task Force
- Youth Coordinator Annual Report
- Teen Ambassadors and Teen Leadership Council
- Regular meetings

Continuous monitoring by the Teen Task Force and teen advisory groups will guarantee community participation in the planning and evaluation process. Mechanisms to monitor external progress will include:

- Regular meetings and town hall forums with community stakeholders
- Program evaluations
- Teen Ambassadors

The Teen Task Force will be responsible for systematically reviewing and monitoring the success of the Youth Action Plan. Through regular meetings of the Teen Task Force with a Departmental Coordinator, this living document will be updated and reworked as we accomplish the Action Steps. As staff continue to respond to the needs of the youth community, revisions will be made to the Youth Action Plan so that it is always a relevant document.

Appendix

- A. Terminology
- B. Xtreme Teens Program Highlights
- C. Xtreme Teens Program Planning Guide
- D. 40 Developmental Assets - Search Institute
- E. Youth Action Planning Matrix
- F. Youth Action Plan Team
- G. Bibliography

APPENDIX A

Terminology

Adolescence- A period of transition from childhood to adulthood, a process in which physiological and psychological change occurs. (Challenging and complex, but also time for opportunity, expanding horizons, and shaping one’s self concept.)

At-Risk Youth- Youth who are thought to be more likely to undertake “risk behaviors” due to community or family circumstances. (This term is now considered labeling, because all youth are at risk of participating in activities that negatively influence their development.)

CAPRA - The Commission for Accreditation of Parks and Recreation Agencies (CAPRA) evaluates agencies utilizing 155 accreditation standards that benchmark best practices in park and recreation around the world. Once all standards are satisfied, the agency is officially accredited.

Cultural Competence – The ability to understand and recognize rules, values, beliefs, and norms of individuals, subsystems, and groups within society.

Debrief- Fundamental learning strategy in which participants perform an activity, then reflect on their experience.

Developmental Assets—Building blocks teens need as a foundation for growing up.

Diversity- A celebration of differences among people that seek to encourage participation of those differences in the pursuit of equality and fairness. (Each youth possess characteristics or qualities that define who they are, some by choice and some by nature.)

Facilitator- Person who makes things easier or more convenient by developing an atmosphere where people feel safe and empowered to participate in a particular process. (The facilitator remains neutral in regards to content and guides a group from one point to another.)

Health and Wellness - Health and wellness incorporates a comprehensive view of health—one that speaks to a person’s well-being, and potential to improve and strengthen the health of the community.

Intentionality- Quality or success is done by design, condition pertaining to programs and outcomes.

Leadership - Process of influencing others, inspiring others, building relationships, building and reshaping values, while maintaining a commitment to the growth of others.

Leader Presence-A youth worker’s knowledge, energy, and sincerity, has the power to influence values, attitudes, behaviors, in order to transition youth who are developmentally dealing with the task of establishing who they are as individuals.

Matrix – A mold or format used for originating, developing, or containing information in an organized fashion.

OST - Out of school time provider such as parks and recreation departments, Boys and Girls Clubs, and licensed childcare.

Performance Measures – Criterion that reflects intended consequences of a program, used in the evaluation process, in which the specific action behavior that can be operationalized and tested.

Praxis - Action followed by reflection; knowledge that comes from the experience of living one's own life. Learn, then change, modify, strengthen, or improve future actions.)

Professional Development -Term that refers to a variety of education, training, and learning opportunities that have the common goal of increasing the knowledge and skills of staff members and volunteers.

Quality Assurance Teams - The quality assurance or observation teams support the Youth Action Plan by ensuring that the objectives, strategies and action steps are being met according to Commission policy and procedures.

Ready by 21 - Ready for school, work and life. This goal requires that young people have the supports, opportunities and services needed to prosper and contribute where they live, learn, work, play and make a difference.

Resiliency - An ability to recover from or adjust easily to misfortune or change. (Resilient individuals are well adapted to deal with stressors in their lives and have the supports, opportunities, and services needed to help them cope and grow.)

Service Learning - Is a successful method of teaching, learning and reflecting that combines academic classroom curriculum with meaningful work experience throughout the community. As a teaching methodology, it falls under the category of experiential education. More specifically, it integrates meaningful community service with instruction and reflection to enrich the learning experience, teach civic responsibility, encourage lifelong civic engagement and strengthen communities.

Step Up To Health - A nation wide, science-based, community change program to help communities battle against obesity and sedentary lifestyles through the support and health management practices of park and recreation departments throughout the United States. Sponsored by the National Recreation and Parks Association, this program enables local park and recreation departments to add value to existing assets, encourage collaboration with stakeholders, and engage citizens at the individual, family, neighborhood, and community levels.

Teen Ambassadors - Xtreme Teens representatives ages 16-17 that are hired to promote Departmental programs and activities for young people and provide feedback on Departmental activities and programs.

Teen Leadership Council - A group of diverse teenagers ages 14–17, representing the youth voice of the M-NCPPC Xtreme Teens programs and activities. Youth participants will strengthen relations between youth and their community through innovative leadership opportunities in recreation, and service learning and act as parks and recreation advocates.

Teen Task Force - A group designed to lead and develop the Xtreme Teens and Xtreme Pre-Teens program within the M-NCPPC Department of Parks and Recreation. Departmental

representatives from each Division within the Department, Youth Coordinator, and Program Superintendents comprise the group. The Steering Team of the Teen Task Force is responsible for monitoring the outcomes of the Youth Action Plan.

Vision - A strategic and systematic document that outlines the Department's approach to providing youth with accessible and available opportunities that improve their quality of life, increase their chances for achievement and promote their development into responsible adults.

Xtreme Pre-Teens - Youth ages 10-12 that participate in the Department of Parks and Recreation activities and programs.

Xtreme Teens - Youth ages 13-17 that participate in the Department of Parks and Recreation programs and activities.

Youth Action Plan - A strategic and systematic document that outlines the Department's approach to providing youth with accessible and available opportunities that improve their quality of life, increase their chances for achievement and promote their development into responsible adults.

Youth Action Plan Team - Departmental representatives who conduct research; develop strategies, action steps, and tasks used to formulate the Youth Action Plan.

Teen Task Force Steering Team - Departmental representatives that oversee the implementation of the Youth Action Plan. The group is comprised of 4-Program Superintendents, 3-Teen Task Force Members, CAPRA Accreditation Manager, Youth Coordinator and Division Chief of Special Programs.

Youth Culture - The unique symbols, beliefs, and behaviors that represents young people within society.

Youth Coordinator - An individual responsible the Department of Parks and Recreation's youth development initiatives and for the implementation the Department's Youth Action Plan.

Youth Development - The process which prepares young people to meet the challenges of adolescence and adulthood through a coordinated, progressive series of activities and experiences which help them to become socially, emotionally, physically, and cognitively competent.

Youth Mentoring - The process of promoting a relationship or relationships between experienced healthy adults and youth; the relationships can be distinguished by their consistency & intensity, developmental focus, and their impact on a young person's transition into adulthood.

Youth Stakeholders - Groups within the community that are affected by the supports, opportunities, and services produced by the Department. These groups may include policy makers, agency managers, program sponsors, target participants, and program staff. Stakeholders generally share a common purpose but may sometimes have competing or combative views.

Youth Workers - An individual whose condition of employment requires them to interact directly or indirectly with adolescents.

APPENDIX C



Xtreme Teens Program Planning Guide

This form is to help you with program planning. On the back of this form is a listing of the 40 Developmental Assets, which are the building blocks that help young people to grow up healthy, caring and responsible.

Choosing The Assets

From the listing on the back, check off at least five (5) developmental assets that will guide you as you create your program.

Program Development

- A. Name of Program: _____
- B. What Age Group: ___ Xtreme Teen (ages 13-17) ___ Xtreme Pre-Teen (ages 10-12)
___ Both
- C. Desired Outcomes: What's in it for the participants?
(i.e. from the back page, no.30 - "Teens accept and take personal responsibilities")

Program Implementation

- A. Description of Activity: What is the project? Describe the program.

- B. Date, Time, Place of Event:

- C. Supplies, equipment, maintenance assistance, permits, vans, etc.

- D. Budget request:

- E. Outside vendors, resources, transportation, DJ, equipment, rental, Park Police/security, volunteers, etc.

- F. Marketing/Promotions-flyers, marquee, press release, PSA, target marketing areas, etc.

- G. Inclusion/ADA needs:

- H. Minimum: _____ Maximum: _____ of participants.
- I. Important Phone Numbers: _____
- J. Prepared By: _____ Approved By: _____
Comments _____

APPENDIX D

40 Developmental Assets TM

1. **Family Support**- Family life provides high levels of love and support.
2. **Positive Family Communication** -Young person and her or his parent(s) communicate positively, and young person is willing to seek advice and counsel from parents.
3. **Other Adult Relationships** - Young person receives support from three or more non-parent adults.
4. **Caring Neighborhood** - Young person experiences caring neighbors.
5. **Caring School Climate** - School provides a caring, encouraging environment.
6. **Parent Involvement in Schooling** - Parent(s) are actively involved in helping young person succeed in school.
7. **Community Values Youth** - Young person perceives that adults in the community value youth.
8. **Youth as Resources** - Young people are given useful roles in the community.
9. **Service to Others** - Young person serves in the community one hour or more per week.
10. **Safety**-Young person feels safe at home, school, and in the neighborhood.
11. **Family Boundaries** - Family has clear rules and consequences and monitors the young person's whereabouts.
12. **School Boundaries** - School provides clear rules and consequences.
13. **Neighborhood Boundaries** - Neighbors take responsibility for monitoring young people's behavior.
14. **Adult Role Models** - Parent(s) and other adults model positive, responsible behavior.
15. **Positive Peer Influence** - Young person's best friends model responsible behavior.
16. **High Expectations** - Both parent(s) and teachers encourage the young person to do well.
17. **Creative Activities** - Young person spends three or more hours per week in lessons or practice in music, theater, or other arts.
18. **Youth Programs** - Young person spends three or more hours per week in sports, clubs, or organizations at school and/or in the community.
19. **Religious Community** - Young person spends one or more hours per week in activities in a religious institution.

20. **Time at Home** - Young person is out with friends "with nothing special to do" two or fewer nights per week.
21. **Achievement Motivation** - Young person is motivated to do well in school.
22. **School Engagement** - Young person is actively engaged in learning.
23. **Homework** - Young person reports doing at least one hour of homework every school day.
24. **Bonding to School** - Young person cares about her or his school.
25. **Reading for Pleasure** - Young person reads for pleasure three or more hours per week.
26. **Caring** - Young person places high value on helping other people.
27. **Equality and Social Justice** - Young person places high value on promoting equality and reducing hunger and poverty.
28. **Integrity** - Young person acts on convictions and stands up for her or his beliefs.
29. **Honesty** - Young person "tells the truth even when it is not easy."
30. **Responsibility** - Young person accepts and takes personal responsibility.
31. **Restraint** - Young person believes it is important not to be sexually active or to use alcohol or other drugs.
32. **Planning and Decision Making** - Young person knows how to plan ahead and make choices.
33. **Interpersonal Competence** - Young person has empathy, sensitivity, and friendship skills.
34. **Cultural Competence** - Young person has knowledge of and comfort with people of different cultural/racial/ethnic backgrounds.
35. **Resistance Skills** - Young person can resist negative peer pressure and dangerous situations.
36. **Peaceful Conflict Resolution** - Young person seeks to resolve conflict nonviolently.
37. **Personal Power** - Young person feels he or she has control over "things that happen to me."
38. **Self-Esteem** - Young person reports having a high self-esteem.
39. **Sense of Purpose** - Young person reports that "my life has a purpose."
40. **Positive View of Personal Future** - Young person is optimistic about her or his personal future.

APPENDIX E

Youth Action Planning Matrix

Category:

Objective:

Strategy:

Desired Outcomes (developmental assets):

Justification (Why do this? What is the consequence of doing nothing?):

Action Plan

	Action Steps and Suggested Tasks to Complete	Completion Date	Responsibility for Completion (Lead and Support)
1.			
2.			
3.			
4.			
5.			
6.			
7.			
8.			
9.			

Anticipated Barriers to Implementation/ Resources Required:

Stakeholders (Who will be affected internally and externally?):

APPENDIX F

YOUTH ACTION PLAN TEAM

Team 1 – Organization and Program Structure:

Marybeth Dugan	Christine Brett
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Craig Newell	Zina Mitchell

Team 2 – Staff Education and Training:

Cheryl Moran	Paul Hall
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Alicia Franklin-Edwards	

Team 4 – Community Outreach (collaborations and partnerships):

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Sherri Kittrell	Jeneanne Hunter
Regina Casey	Barbara Funk
Wanda Ramos	

Team 5 – Marketing:

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John Henderson	Tracey Butler
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APPENDIX G

Additional Information

Portions of the research used to support this document were conducted as part of graduate study work, see:

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