

CITY OF OAKLAND
AGENDA REPORT

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TO: Office of the City Administrator
ATTN: Deborah A. Edgerly
FROM: Office of Parks and Recreation
DATE: October 25, 2007

RE: **Informational Report from the Office of Parks and Recreation on a
Follow-up Report Regarding the Radical Roving Recreation Program**

SUMMARY

At the September 11, 2007 Life Enrichment Committee, staff presented a report on the Office of Parks and Recreation's (OPR) Radical Roving Recreation (RRR) program. City Council asked OPR to return to Life Enrichment Committee with a more thorough report discussing the following items:

- 1) The mission and target areas for the program;
- 2) Detailed description of target population and how participants are tracked;
- 3) Update on existing partnership with the Oakland Unified School District on this program, if applicable;
- 4) Outcomes of the 67 original youth served by this program;
- 5) Clarify expected outcomes and outreach strategies.

Radical Roving Recreation (RRR) is a program initiative of the Office of Parks and Recreation (OPR) with the purpose of empowering misguided and misdirected youth and young adults ages 14 to 21. The program is designed to reach young people who traditionally have not participated in structured programs. The mission of RRR is aligned with the overall mission of OPR and 2004 Council goals: To build communities and foster livable neighborhoods and to ensure that all Oakland Youth have the opportunity to be successful. The RRR program attempts to achieve these goals by addressing the attitudes of the youth who engage in the services provided.

Many of the youth in RRR have been neglected by their families, the educational institutions and society as a whole. RRR is designed to meet the emotional, mental and physical needs of the participants. The program promotes youth development and leadership skills through programs that are flexible, personal and supportive. The program targets youth who are exhibiting or have exhibited risk factors such as the use of alcohol or drugs; history of early aggression; social or learning problems; exposure to violence at home, or in the neighborhood; parental drug or alcohol use; friends who engage in problem behavior; academic failure or poor commitment to school; poverty;

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homelessness; recent divorce, relocation or other family disruption; or access to firearms. RRR seeks to connect with these youth through a program designed to provide significant leadership opportunities and life experiences. By engaging these youth in a supportive community, RRR seeks to prevent criminal behavior and reduce the number of youth in the juvenile justice system.

FISCAL IMPACT

Since this report is informational only, no fiscal impacts are included.

BACKGROUND

Prior to 2004, the Office of Parks and Recreation (OPR) experienced a significant reduction in budget allocations; therefore the department focused its youth programs primarily on sports for youth between the ages of 14 to 18 years.

In April 2004, the Office of Parks and Recreation learned that on any given day 4,000 youth were absent or truant from school. This alarming number prompted the OPR to address this problem by implementing the Radical Roving program in partnership with the Oakland Unified School District (OUSD). OPR's focus and challenge was to take these youngsters off the street, provide structure and encourage them to return to school or enroll in classes that would complete their General Education Development (GED) Certificate requirements.

In partnership with the Oakland Unified School District's Community Day School, OPR launched the pilot RRR program in June 2004. The program served sixty-seven (67) diverse youth who were referred by OUSD. Of the 67 participants, 65 youth had never visited a recreation center, much less participated in structured programs. The youth participated in structured programming for a total of 144 hours. Activities provided included boating, sailing, lifeguard skills, drama, dance, theatre production, photography, outdoor adventures, cooking classes, self-esteem building, rap sessions, golf, music production and traditional sports. OUSD reevaluated the 34 students who completed the full 144 hours for reentry into mainstream education, provided they had completed their requirements at the Community Day School. Due to the termination of the partnership with OUSD, OPR does not have any data on how students progressed in school.

Of the 34 participants who graduated from the program, 6 earned a certificate in basic sailing giving them unlimited access to sail or kayak at Lake Merritt Boating Center; 7 participants learned to swim; 4 qualified and were employed in summer jobs with the Office of Parks and Recreation; and one served as a volunteer for OPR. Unfortunately, one participant returned to juvenile hall due to his breach of contract with his group home (after three violations participants are removed and placed back in juvenile hall). This particular participant already had two violations when he enrolled in RRR. After

becoming engaged in structured programs and demonstrating an interest in school he was teased and harassed by other youth in the home and got into a fist fight which led to his third violation. It is important to note that while incarcerated he contacted the department to thank the staff for caring about him and for providing him and others with a safe space.

In December 2004 the partnership with the OUSD was terminated due to the lack of financial support and background information needed from OUSD to understand the students OPR was serving. The abrupt termination of the program disconnected OPR from contact with the students. However, several students stayed in contact with OPR on their own. One participant, now 21 years of age, was reintegrated into mainstream public education and graduated from Castlemont High School; he is currently working at Jamba Juice. Another youth has been transferred to a group home in Fremont, California and is presently a senior in high school there. Unfortunately, another participant, according to his parents has been incarcerated for 5 years.

Without the partnership with OUSD, the program continued throughout 2005 operating out of the San Antonio Recreation Center in partnerships with the Drug Enforcement Agency (DEA), California National Guard, County of Alameda Nutrition Program, and East Bay Conservation Corps to provide educational programs for RRR. In working with our partners OPR reconsidered the age criteria for RRR because of the youth's interest in more programs. OPR extended the Radical Roving Recreation program to include ages 19 through 21 years.

OPR continued to gain momentum in partnerships. In December 2005, in collaboration with the Oakland Housing Authority, OPR opened Campbell Village Recreation Center located at 800 Willow Street (an area known to the local community as "The Lower Bottoms"). Campbell Village is a small site that had been closed for approximately twelve years. OPR has been operating continuously at Campbell Village since reopening the facility two years ago. The RRR program at Campbell Village is currently serving 44 youth who have been consistently participating in the program, with an average of 15 to 20 drop-ins per week. Of that number, 58% (24 youth) were not enrolled in school when they started the program. Currently RRR has seventeen participants who have reenrolled in school (twelve in high school and five in community college).

KEY ISSUES AND IMPACTS

Radical Roving Recreation targets underserved and hard-to-serve youth in Oakland who are on street corners and typically do not attend school. The program seeks to connect with these youth through a program designed to provide significant guidance and positive life experiences and opportunities. RRR activities address the whole person by preparing youth with life skills that translate into successful educational experiences and employment opportunities. OPR offers essential services in the form of innovative

recreation programs as a way of preventing criminal behavior and reducing the occurrence of youth incarceration or other involvement in the juvenile justice system.

The RRR program differs from OPR's regular programs to the extent that many of the RRR youth are dealing with identity crisis, loss of hope and have significant issues that have led them to distrust and disrespect authority. It is not prudent to mix the two populations of youth at the outset due to differing lifestyles paths, expectations and needs. Because of this it is difficult to provide services citywide due to the lack of sufficient space at most of OPR's existing centers.

The program continues to meet many challenges as it expands in its recruitment. A huge challenge is identifying, retaining and partnering with onsite case workers and/or counseling teams. RRR youth have a myriad of personal problems which they desire to work through but they have found it difficult to access meaningful, consistent and genuine counseling support.

OPR has reached out to a number of counseling agencies and is currently finalizing partnerships with Sankofa and Attitudinal Healing. OPR has teamed up with many like-minded individuals, community partners, public agencies and non-profit organizations interested in working with RRR participants. These include: East Bay Conservation Corps, Alameda County Probation Department, Oakland Police Activities League, Alameda County Public Health Department, Oakland Housing Authority, Empowering Youth Through Music (EYTM), Films in the Hood, Attitudinal Healing, Sankofa, Oakland Public Library, West Oakland Health Clinic, Rotary Nature Center, OPR Aquatics Division, Studio One, Community Gardening, City Slickers Farms, Neighborhood Crime Prevention Councils, California College of the Arts, McCullum Youth Court, and Crisis Response Specialists.

PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

Staffing

The current year personnel budget for RRR includes one Program Director (1.0 FTE), one Recreation Leader II, PPT (.75 FTE) and 10 part-time staff (2.28 FTE). The Program Director job description includes developing, coordinating and leading recreational activities which may include specialized programs and special events. The Program Director is also responsible for fostering collaborations with other organizations, scheduling staff and attending community and agency meetings to build support of RRR. Part time program staff are responsible for providing direct services to participants which includes teaching, monitoring classes, and organizing special events for each RRR site as well as building relationships with youth and family supporters. Included in the part time staff are recreation specialists called "rovers" who teach special classes such as painting, broadcasting, filmmaking, fundamentals of music as well as other special skilled classes.

Program Hours and Activities

RRR core programs run Mondays through Fridays from 4:00-8:00 pm. and include field trips, sports activities, workshops, team-building, health information, career planning, tutoring, community gardening and Teen Advisory Boards. Current specialized roving programs include: Yoga Night, Footwear Design 510, Cooking Class, Student in Training (SIT), Learn How to Start Your Own Business, Literacy Program, Job Readiness, Sewing, Studio Music Production, Creative Writing, Learn How To Swim, Broadcasting, Filmmaking, Airbrushing, Open Microphone, and Poetry Slams.

Currently Campbell Village Teen Center operates 4 p.m. to 8 p.m., with two part-time staff on duty offering core programs and additional rovers and partners teaching specialized classes. Tassafaronga Recreation Center has one dedicated staff 4 p.m. to 8 p.m., twenty hours weekly of core programs and ten additional hours of specialized program. San Antonio Recreation Center has four hours of programming weekly provide by roving staff. Allendale Recreation Center has sixteen dedicated staff hours for core programs with eight hours of specialized programming. Mosswood Recreation Center has six hours of specialized programs and Brookdale Recreation Center has two hours of specialized programs.

Outreach/Recruitment

Two part time staff, working as a team, are dedicated to recruitment/outreach approximately 20-30 hours per week. The outreach/recruitment workers are assigned to targeted areas where they approach young people on the streets who are neither in school nor working and distribute pamphlets and brochures that outline RRR and general OPR programs. The outreach/recruitment team also distributes referral slips that provide contact information for RRR staff and collect potential participant information. Staff keep track of the number of referral slips distributed and the participants recruited monthly. Emphasis of outreach in recent months has concentrated on police beats 6X and 2Y in concert with the Mayor's Office Public Safety Initiative. In addition, RRR recruitment focuses on "hot spots" where violent events have recently occurred.

Radical Roving Recreation is based on a fundamental respect for each person and meeting the youth "where they are." The activities OPR offers within this program are meant to provide opportunities to develop skills and abilities in ways that are meaningful to the participants. When a participant comes to a RRR site, they are given a very short questionnaire which provides staff with enough information to help support some of their needs. However, no one in the target age range is turned away from participating in any of the RRR program. Participation in the intake process is voluntary.

Evaluation Methods

Radical Roving Recreation is based on a fundamental respect for each person and meeting the youth “where they are.” The activities OPR offers within this program are meant to provide opportunities to develop skills and abilities in ways that are meaningful to the participants. The outreach/recruitment street team makes contact with youth or young adults on the streets as well. Referral slips are handed out as well as information regarding programs and available centers in the area. RRR tracks the number of referrals that we give out weekly by the outreach team. When a participant comes to a RRR site, they are given a very short questionnaire which provides staff with enough information to help support some of their needs. However, no one in the target age range is turned away from participating in any of the RRR program. Participation in the intake process is voluntary.

OPR currently uses RecWare to track the numbers of participants enrolled in registered programs or who drop in at the RRR sites daily.

Benchmarks and outcome goals that have been established for the program include the following:

- 250 participants enrolled citywide per year
- 960 hours of classes and programs per year
- 2000 drop-in recreation & special events participants per year
- 50 participants receiving intensive program support per year
- 500 potential participant contacts at special events
- 10 general outreach events
- 12 – 15 youth serving agencies i.e..Juvenile Hall, Group Homes, Foster Care, etc.

OPR is developing partnerships with local universities and colleges to establish an evaluation tool that will best meet the needs of the RRR program.

SUSTAINABLE OPPORTUNITIES

Economic: Economic opportunities are provided to youth who complete the Student in Training program and successfully meet the required job readiness classes.

Environmental: RRR emphasizes park stewardship, and provides instruction on community gardening; participants are well-informed about the importance of a healthy environment.

Social Equity: RRR intentionally recruits participants who have been overlooked by society and not currently engaged or viewed as viable citizens.

DISABILITY AND SENIOR CITIZEN ACCESS

Radical Roving Recreation programs and facilities are accessible to disabled patrons and comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and other non-discrimination laws and regulations. The program is not relevant to Senior Citizens.

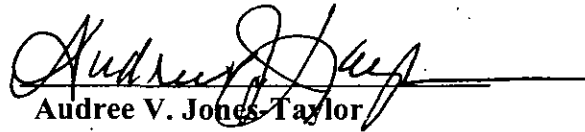
RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends that City Council accept this informational report on the Office of Parks and Recreation's Radical Roving Recreation program.

ACTION REQUESTED OF THE CITY COUNCIL

Staff requests that City Council accept this informational report on the Office of Parks and Recreation's Radical Roving Recreation program.

Respectfully submitted,



Audree V. Jones-Taylor
Director, Office of Parks and Recreation

Prepared by:
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Office of Parks and Recreation

APPROVED AND FORWARDED TO THE
LIFE ENRICHMENT COMMITTEE


OFFICE OF THE CITY ADMINISTRATOR

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