

Session: Serving the Outdoor Needs of Changing Populations

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Note-taker: Sara Grover, Project Get Outdoors, esgrover@aol.com

Bev Wittgenstein:

- Kids are not playing outdoors, how will that affect our future core of conservationists?
- Cultural differences/perspectives affect outdoor experiences (time of day, fear, etc.)

Jay Hutchinson:

- With the changing population, we have changing uses of our parks
- There is a huge demand for facilities and services that can be used at leisure

Kao Thao:

- Most Non-English speaking families have no experience with parks, especially inner-city families.
- Because many minority/immigrant youth spend time watching TV, playing video games or on the computer, they have no real understanding of the outdoors and therefore they fear it. No appreciation for wildlife.
- It takes more convincing to get these groups out to parks.
- Fees affect low-income visitor use.
- Immigrants like to gather in large social groups and most parks are not set up to accommodate these big gatherings.

Jan Ficken:

- Use an outreach approach through neighbors that gets kids involved and leads to family involvement.
- Find experts in the community who have relationships with minority groups and work with them to develop a program.
- Try to hire staff that reflect the diversity of your community.
- Be informed of the socio-economic issues facing the different groups and work to find new funding sources so that families can afford to participate.
- Make registration process less complicated.
- Get feedback from the different groups to assess their needs.

Katie Mommaerts:

- 20-somethings not involved in organized activities because they lack the confidence to participate. Re-introduction programs that help re-teach basic sports skills would be valuable.
- Grew up outdoors but now detached from outdoor experiences.
- Tend to camp with i-pods and cell phones.

Jim Topitzhofer:

- Latino community wants recreation on their own terms; the entire family is typically involved in recreating together.
- Develop relationships with groups in the community that are already partnering with the Latino community. Build trust.

Abdisalam Adam:

- Understand the historic plight of each different ethnic group.
- By understanding the former lifestyles of immigrants in their homelands, you can better understand their needs here.
- Cultural and religious differences can be barriers to outdoor activity.
- We need to start a dialogue with the Somalis community about outdoor recreation.
- The re-immersion of diverse groups using parks reminds us of why parks were created: to bring people together!

Greatest Challenges:

- Communication
- Relevance
- Access
- Diverse Interests
- Fear
- Appropriate Facilities
- Flexibility
- Adaptable Policies
- Large Group Size
- Education
- Cultural Awareness
- Privacy
- Staffing Insensitivity
- Registration Process
- Advertising – Outreach
- Fast Changing Demographics
- Employing Diverse Staff
- Empty Existing Facilities
- Identifying Key Cultural Leaders in Community
- Resources
- Transportation
- Misunderstanding of Regulations
- Appropriate Time/Scheduling
- Building Partnerships
- Lost Generation
- Training Next Generation of Professionals

Existing Best Practices:

- Facilitation of groups to create positive experiences so participants want to come back individually.
- Positive first experiences.

- Culturally specific.
- Outreach
- Community dialogue
- Partnerships/collaborations
- Finding leaders of Minnesota groups
- Training; skill building of recreating
- Provide facilities requested
- International travel
- Establish parks in diverse communities
- Looking at diverse populations as a culture and not as a race.

Gaps:

- Understanding culturally specific needs.
- Resisting changes
- Funding
- Education
- Communication
- Adequate staffing
- Incorporate cultural diversity into position descriptions
- Adaptation of facilities
- Sensitivity
- Awareness that it's an opportunity
- Space
- Age/Generational issues

Top Priorities:

1. Inclusion
 - Website links to cultural and age/generational information/data (traditions, lifestyle information, statistics, case studies, facility needs, recreation needs, logistical information, etc.)
2. Reading list of cultural education books with overview of the history of different cultures.
3. List of experts and resources related to different ethnic groups.
3. Cultural Immersion Pairing Day: Professionals would job shadow minority leaders.
4. Market recreation programs to college-age young adults to participate in weekend adventure outings for that age group.
5. Other challenges within the diversity topic are disabilities, GLBT, single parents, grandparents raising grandkids, etc.
6. We need to look at who is NOT participating and consider those groups as new opportunities and new markets.