

## Benefits of Parks & Recreation

American and Canadian organizations have identified four major Benefit Categories: Individual, Community, Economic, and E

Within each category are dozens of specific benefits, which are substantiated by facts, field studies, testimonials and research fi ways that parks and recreation works for you, your neighbors, your kids and your communities...

### Individual Benefits

#### **Improves Academic Performance**

- Better Health in Later Years
- Immediate Stress Reduction
- Increased Self-Esteem and Confidence
- Reduces Stress

#### **Improved Academic Performance**

- In 1991, 75% of the children enrolled in the Fort Myers, Florida, STARS Program were making less than a C average in school. 1,500 children enrolled had brought their grades up to a C average or better. (Healing America's Cities 1994)

#### **Health Benefits in Later Years**

- Women can attain higher bone density through childhood participation in organized sports and fitness programs, thereby establishing combat osteoporosis in later years. (The Benefits of Parks and Recreation - A Catalogue 1992)
- Improved Health Benefits Immediately

- A water aerobics program two times a week for 16 weeks significantly reduced diastolic blood pressure, body fat and body weight in residents. (The Benefits of Parks and Recreation - A Catalogue 1992)

#### **Positive Changes in Self-Concept**

- Significant and marked positive changes in self-concept were shown by sixth graders participating in 5-day camping programs. (The Benefits of Parks and Recreation - A Catalogue 1992)

### Community Benefits

#### **Reduces Adult and Juvenile Crime**

- Keeps Kids Off the Streets
- Builds Strong Communities
- Connects Families

#### **Reduced Incarceration Rates**

- The US incarceration rate average is 426 prisoners per 100,000 population. This is the highest of any country in the world. Brainerd, Minnesota started alternative programs in 1973 and now has an incarceration rate of 73 per 100,000. (Healing America's Cities 1994)

#### **Reduced Juvenile Crime**

- In Fort Myers, Florida, juvenile arrests have dropped 28% since 1990 when the city began its STARS program for adolescents. (Healing America's Cities - 1994)

- In Phoenix during 1993-94, approximately 5,200 youths were detained for curfew violations. The City Street Project since 1993 has reduced juvenile crime and violence. Police report that the curfew program has reduced juvenile night-time criminal activity and violent juvenile arrests during the first 11 months of the program. Cost per person - \$105.74. (Beyond Fun and Games - 1994)

- Cincinnati, Ohio initiated the Late Evening Recreation Programs in 1993. During the initial 13 week period, the number of juvenile arrests dropped 24% from 645 to 491. Cost per person \$56. (Beyond Fun and Games - 1994)

Increased Community Pride



- In Philadelphia after police helped neighborhood volunteers clean up vacant lots and plant gardens, burglaries and thefts in the about 40 crimes each month before the cleanup to an average of only four per month. (Healing America's Cities - 1994)

## **Economic Benefits**

### **Increases Property Values**

- Reduces Health Care and Insurance Costs
- Reduces Employee Absenteeism
- Increases Productivity
- Boosts Tourism

### **Property Values Increased**

- In Salem, Oregon, urban land next to a green belt was worth \$1,200 more per acre than urban land 1,000 feet away. (Healing America's Cities - 1994)
- Steelcase Corporation showed that medical costs were 55% lower for fitness program participants than non-participants over a year. (\$478 for participants vs. \$870 for non-participants. (The Economic Benefits of Regular Exercise - 1992)

### **Increased Productivity**

- Union Pacific Railroad found that 80% of its employees believed that their exercise programs were helping them be more productive. 80 percent thought that regular exercise was helping them achieve higher levels of relaxation and concentration at work. (The Economic Benefits of Regular Exercise - 1992)
- Stimulus for Tourism

Parks stimulate tourism activity nationwide. Two thirds of all visitors to Oregon stopped at a state park in 1993, generating an annual state estimated at \$500 million. Oregon ranks 31st nationally in amount of state park land and comes in fourth nationally in park land per capita. (Healing America's Cities - 1994)

## **Environmental Benefits**

### **Preserves Plant and Animal Wildlife**

- Controls Air, Water and Soil Quality
- Keeps Kids Off the Streets
- Provides Accessible Places to Enjoy Nature

### **Pollution Controls**

- Greenways, which help conserve plants and trees, provide a valuable contribution toward pollution control because they mitigate air pollution. (National Park Service - 1990)
- Preservation of Natural Habitat

- Without increased amount of natural habitat, forest lands, wetlands, cultural sites and recreation land, the continued degradation will undoubtedly lead to additional Endangered Species Act listings, complete with public contention and economic disruption. (Recreation Legacy - 1994)
- Air, Water and Soil Quality

- According to a study conducted at the University of Calcutta, India, one tree's contribution over 50 years in controlling air pollution, recycling water and humidity is worth a total of \$196,250. (Oregon Department of Forestry - 1994)

### **Community Support for Improved Quality of Life**

- In 1992, 64 percent of Los Angeles County voters approved Proposition A, the Safe Neighborhood Parks Act - a special proposition that allocated \$540 million to redesign old parks, buy land and build recreation facilities.





### **Everyone Benefits!**

Everyone in the world has somehow benefited by public park and recreation programs at some time in their lives - directly or indirectly. We can make the connection between past experiences and today's success, yesterday's activities and tomorrow's physical and mental well-being, and support and safe communities for our children and grandchildren.

So, whether an avid participant or occasional observer, enjoy the benefits. It's everyone's right!