

Keeping youth off the street and safe should be a main concern for any community. Offering youth in communities a “Late Night Recreation” program where they could go to at night to play sports, take classes, play games, dance and have fun would be a benefit for both the individual youth and the community as a whole. Most importantly, youth have somewhere to build relationships, develop self-esteem, learn teamwork, break down barriers and learn that it is possible for everyone to get along. The programs also can be used to promote a healthy lifestyle that is free of drugs and alcohol and provide health awareness on a variety of levels. These programs also give youth somewhere to go instead of just hanging out or getting into trouble. The community benefits from these programs in a few different ways. One advantage is that the programs keep youth off the street and it helps cut down on crime. The program is designed to be open during the hours ranging from 6:00pm through 1:00am. These are the peak hours that most youths have free time and tend to be involved in activities that are more delinquent in nature. They will often become involved in more drug and alcohol use as well involvement in crimes that are against the law. According to the Phoenix Parks and Recreation Department they saw a 52% drop in juvenile crime over the course of a two summer late night recreation program (1994). The program was so well received by the youth that they had an amazing participation amount of 135,000 in 1992. This type of positive outcome has been seen in many other communities that have developed the late night recreation program as well. The late night recreation program in Seattle, Washington saw a 30% reduction in juvenile crime its first year in operation. The Chicago Housing Authority initiated a highly successful Midnight Basketball League that was proven to detour youth from gang activity (McLean, Hurd, & Roger, 2005). The second advantage

to a community that institutes a late night recreation program can be summed up by an old African proverb, “It takes a whole village to raise a child.” This is definitely the truth. There must be community involvement at all levels to help our youth succeed and flourish. Giving them the opportunity to congregate in an environment where they feel safe, can expand their horizons and have positive peers and influences is giving them the foundation to seek out and explore the world in a positive way.

One of the most popular sports that is played at a Late Night Recreation program is basketball because most centers have basketball courts and it’s a way for individuals to meet new people, and show off their skills. According to David Derezotes (1995) he quoted a gang member who is also a participant in the Late Night program saying “It’s hard to shoot someone after you play ball with him” (p.33). This just shows how a simple game of basketball or any other activity could dismiss any animosity one might have towards another individual. In *Sports as Prevention? Minneapolis’ Experiment with Late-Night Basketball* it mentioned four different explanations (models) on why basketball helps prevent crime.

The first model is sport-as-building-character model in which it is suppose to build character, self-discipline, and self-esteem. The next model is sport-as-mobility model which view sport as a more tangible and direct vehicle for social incorporation and mobility. The third model is sport-as-social-control model which emphasizes discipline and surveillance. And the last model is sport-as-hook model which views sport as a tool to connect young men with educational and employment opportunities (Hartman & Wheelock, 2002, p. 14).

This kind of program allow youth to possess some if not all of these qualities that they can apply to their lives and influence others (peers) around them.

Unfortunately, a high percentage of youth live in bad neighborhoods, they don't have a support system at home, and/or they are left to raise themselves. These types of programs (Late Night Recreation) can offer counseling or mentors to the individuals that might need someone to talk to. It's a way to let the youth release anything that is bottled up inside them. According to Kellermann, Fuqua-Whitley, & Rivara (1998) "Specific challenges include making an appropriate match between adult and the child, maintaining a schedule of regular contact, and defining expectation of the mentoring relationship" (p. 277). This is important because a youth shouldn't be signed to a mentor that doesn't care about them or paired with someone who wouldn't keep in constant contact with them. If they're (youth) already being neglected at home and/or not doing well in school then there is no need for these unfit mentors to be a part of their lives.

Late night recreation taps into many of the 40 developmental assets that are stated in the text, "All Kids Are Our Kids". Below is a listing of the assets that late night recreation program directly contributes to:

Asset #3 Other Adult relationships: These critical relationships are formed with the coaches, staff and other players.

Asset #7 Community values youth: By developing these programs it shows youth that they matter, they are cared about, and they are an important part of the community as a whole.

Asset #10 Safety: Late night recreation offers youth a supervised and safe environment to participate in or just watch.

Asset #14 Adult Role Models: Youth form positive relationships with coaches and staff.

Asset #15 Positive Peer Influence: Youth are given the opportunity to hang around with other youth who feel like they do.

Asset #18 Youth programs: Youth spend extracurricular time at the program rather than on the street.

Asset # 21-25: These assets are related to commitment to learning. Youth that are involved in recreation activities tend to put more focus on academics.

Asset #33 & 36: Interpersonal competence: Youth learn how to deal with other youth and create friendships and diplomatically resolve disagreements.

Asset #34 Cultural competence: Youth are exposed to others of different cultures and shown how to communicate with one another.

Asset #35 Resistance skills: Allows youth to stay away from dangerous situations.

Asset #37-40 Youth develop all four of these positive identity assets. They develop a sense of purpose as well as a raised self esteem and positive outlook.

Late night recreation programs help youth develop more of the Developmental Assets which have been know to attribute to more successful and well adjusted youth.

We surveyed ten high school students about a Late Night Recreation program and from their responses these student were all for it. They liked the idea of having somewhere to go that would keep them out of trouble, having fun, meeting new people, and more. What they want to see is different activities that they can better themselves at or learn how to do. Some of these activities that these students said they want at a

program like this are basketball, weight lifting, soccer, dance off, rap battles, football, boxing tournaments, video arcades, exercising classes, karate, and musical instruments (piano). There were a few of these youth who stressed how this Late Night Recreation program would keep them from gang banging or getting into trouble. By having a program like this it would help decrease crime in communities and allow youth from different backgrounds to interact each other. It also gives the parents of the youth a piece of mind knowing where their child is and not having to worry about them. It also serves as an important outlet for youth, both mentally and physically. The initial opinions gathered from constituents influenced our program delivery by letting us see that this program is possible, it could work, and it is already happening in communities around the United States.

These students are willing to pay for this program and some of them are willing to pay from as low as two dollars to as high as twenty dollars (depending on what is being offered). But it would be nice to have this program free of charge to the youth. Recreation Centers could supply the facilities and sports equipment for this program, local churches and/or cultural groups could volunteer their time to host workshops for youths, teachers and youth from local schools could also volunteer their time to tutor students/peers and the student could get community service hours from it. Other partners that could help with this program are parents (supporting their children and getting involved), local restaurants or grocery stores (donating food, snacks, and water), the City that this program will take place in (financially helping with unmet needs), corporate, the government, and the local Police Department in that city (this allows police officers to build relationship with the youth that don't like cops).

Description of program

This program is designed to offer youth the opportunity to have a safe place to go at night that offers recreation, academic assistance, socializing events, short (fun) workshops, and cultural activities. The following is a list of the proposed positive offerings in the program:

- a caring atmosphere with peers and adult engagement
- foster positive social norms
- Promotes strong connections between program activities, community, and parents.
- Tutoring, computer classes
- Inter-cultural activities
- Athletic activities like basketball, volleyball, water polo hockey, and more
- And other activities that the youth want to see

Outcome of program

- opportunities for personal development
- raise social consciousness of youth
- to install values in youth
- develop long lasting relationships with staff, coaches, and peers
- give youth a sense of safety
- decreased substance abuse
- reduced juvenile delinquency
- opportunities for youth to interact with other youth that they wouldn't normally hang out with

Seattle Parks and Recreation developed a Late Night Recreation program that represents many aspects of best practices according to Dr. Paul Heckman, an expert from the University Of Washington College Of Education. The program was initiated in 1990 and was a partnership between Seattle Parks and Recreation and the Seattle Police Department. The program was considered an outcome based program that was designed to create long lasting positive results with the youth involved. According to Dr. Heckman the program included student engagement and positive environments which are considered areas of best practices. In the first six months of 2006, the program implemented activities in the areas of arts and culture, health and fitness, sports, academic support and leadership development. They noted that the attendance was better than expected and that the program kept many of the regular attendees throughout the summer. At the conclusion of the program they conducted focus groups that included 75 youth participants. The feedback that they received was positive. Many reported making new friends, staying out of trouble and trying new things. They were very pleased knowing they had a place to go that was safe and considered a neutral zone. They seemed to enjoy the variety of sports available and the positive attitude of the coaches.

The program met all standards of best practices that it was trying to achieve and is known as a very successful Late Night Recreation Program.

Financial support for Late Night Recreation could come from a variety of sources. The Parks and Recreation operating budget would be a main source. Other sources could be the State Department of Public Safety, private agencies; community youth gang services, local Police Departments, and city governments. Fundraising and getting corporate sponsors to contribute is another way to help with the financial support for this program.

References

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Late Night Recreation Program

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