

Benefits of Parks and Recreation



Parks and Recreation Department

Individual Benefits

Starting an activity program reduced the risk of dying by 51% in men who became physically active when compared to those who remained sedentary. (Blair, 1993).

For each additional mile walked or run by a sedentary person, that individual would add an extra 21 minutes to his/her life. (RAND Corporation, 1993)

A recent study by psychologists found that pleasant events such as dinner with friends or a weekend hike in the woods gave a boost to the immune system that lasted two to three days. (Sachs and Segal. "Mind & Body," New Woman. December 1994, p. 50).

"I would go to more dances. I would ride more merry -go-rounds. I would pick more daisies." -from "If I Had My Life to Live Over" by Nadine Starr, age 85

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. After the program, 80% of the 1,500 children enrolled had brought their grades up to a C average or better. (Healing Americans Cities 1994)

Health Benefits in Later Years: Women can attain higher bone density through childhood participation in organized sports and fitness programs, thereby establishing a strong health base to 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 weight in elderly community 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 5day camping programs. (The Benefits of Parks and Recreation - A Catalogue 1992)

Community Benefits

People who are socially involved are two to five times less likely to suffer from heart disease (Club Industry, October 1995)

Csikszentmihalyi and Kleiber found that fondest memories people have of their past tend to involve family outings and vacations (Csikszentmihalyi and Kleiber, "Leisure and Self Actualization," In Driver, et al. Benefits of Leisure, 1991).

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

"This country will not be a good place for any of us to live in unless we make it a good place for all of us to live in." - Theodore Roosevelt

The US incarceration rate average is 426 prisoners per 100,000 population. This is the highest of any country in the world. Britain's rate is 97 per 100,000. Minnesota started alternative programs in 1973 and now has an incarceration rate of 73 per 100,000. (Healing Americans Cities 1994)

Economic Benefits

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)

A Brown University study found that if each American walked one hour a day we could reduce healthcare costs annually by \$20 billion. (1995)

Union Pacific Railroad found that 80% of its employees believed that their exercise programs were helping them be more productive at work: 75% thought that regular exercise was helping them achieve higher levels of relaxation and concentration at work. (The Economic Benefits of Regular Exercise 1992)

Parks stimulate tourism activity nationwide. Two-thirds of all visitors to Oregon stopped at a state park in 1993, generating an annual economic impact to the state estimated at \$500 million. Oregon ranks 31st nationally in amount of state park land and comes in fourth nationally in park usage. (Oregon State Parks 1994)

"It is not surprising that the increase of juvenile crime in many places directly corresponds to general decreases in national, state and local investments in recreation and parks." - R. Dean Tice, Executive Director, NRPA

Environmental Benefits

Greenways, which help conserve plants and trees, provide a valuable contribution toward pollution control because they mitigate water, air and noise pollution. (National Park Service 1990)

Without increased amount of natural habitat, forest lands, wetlands, cultural sites and recreation land, the continued degradation of habitat will continue which will undoubtedly lead to additional Endangered Species Act listings, complete with the attendant public contention and economic disruption. (Creating a Conservation and Recreation Legacy 1994)

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

In 1992, 64% of Los Angeles County voters approved Proposition A, the Safe Neighborhood Parks Act - a special property tax surcharge that provides \$540 million to redesign old parks, buy land and build recreation facilities. (Healing America's Cities 1992)

"Perhaps nature is our best insurance of immortality." - Eleanor Roosevelt

"The future is purchased by the present" - Samuel Johnson