



California Cities Helen Putnam Award for Excellence Long Beach Youth Services Provides Opportunities

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In 2003, the City of Long Beach created a comprehensive Youth Services Program, involving the Long Beach City Council, city departments, Long Beach Unified School District and local agencies serving youth, to provide equal-access recreational and educational opportunities for youth. In 2005, the America's Promise Alliance named Long Beach one of its "100 Best Communities for Young People." The judges noted that Long Beach supports the alliance's goals for youth, which include having caring adults in their lives, safe places in which to learn and grow, a healthy start and future, an effective education and opportunities to give back to their community.

A citywide focus on improving the well-being of youth and families was a key goal of the city's strategic plan, titled *Long Beach 2010*. The plan identified a number of challenges, including poverty, education and vocational training, lack of open space, and providing quality services for its ethnically diverse residents. Collaborating with Youth Services Program partners helped Long Beach to efficiently and cost-effectively deliver services to youth while the city worked to eliminate a \$102 million budget deficit.

Engaging Youth in the Community and Government

The Commission on Youth and Children (CYC) advises the Long Beach City Council on matters affecting the well-being of youth and children. The CYC promotes coordination between the city, Long Beach Unified School District and community, county, state and national agencies. The CYC has 10 adult members and nine members under age 19 at the time of appointment. The adults have skills and interests in the area of youth services, and the young people are recruited from the Long Beach City Council's District Youth Advisory Councils.

The CYC coordinated a "Profile of Long Beach Youth and Children" in 2004 to provide the city council with information on health and social, economic and emotional well-being; safety, education and workforce readiness; and meaningful engagement opportunities. The CYC serves as the advisory board for the Long Beach Youth Fund, a philanthropic program focused on civic engagement. The CYC allocated \$14,000 for anti-violence programs from the fund's \$20,000 budget.

The District Youth Advisory Councils develop teen leadership skills through volunteerism and bring issues affecting Long Beach youth and children to the mayor and city council. Kids learn about city resources and how local government operates. More than 88 young people, ages 14-19, participated in Youth Advisory Council meetings in 2006.

Educational and Vocational Programs

The Youth Services Program has made education, mentoring services and access to educational resources a priority, encouraging young people to succeed in the city's competitive, global information-based economy.

The Community Development Department coordinates the Long Beach Work force Development Board, which secured grants of nearly \$1.43 million to train and place residents in construction training programs. Long Beach City College also awarded the board \$600,000 to train residents in transportation logistics and goods movement.

The Training and Employment Division of the Community Development Department established a Youth Opportunity Center to offer youth ages 14-24 information on employment, job interview preparation, internship/training programs, volunteer opportunities, community resources and academic/career advisement. In 2006, a total of 2,000 youth participated in job readiness training, 200 received intensive education and personal development strategies, 975 gained work experience with local businesses, 750 attended the summer job opportunities fair and 175 participated in the annual job shadowing day.

Providing Equitable Recreation Programs and Facilities

The Parks, Recreation and Marine Youth Services Network is a consortium of more than 260 public and nonprofit agencies working to ensure that young people have equal access to programming throughout the city during after-school, evening and weekend hours. The goal is to increase positive behavior and development. Youth volunteers and participants in network agency programs gain leadership skills through the planning and production of programs.

The Youth Services Network After School Advocacy Partnership (ASAP) Subcommittee provides training for curriculum designers to develop after-school enrichment programs at eight local schools. Through Long Beach Unified School District (LBUSD), ASAP received approximately \$1 million in state grants to operate the eight sites five days a week, three hours a day. The group implements Proposition 49, the statewide After-School Education and Safety program. The Mentor Connection Subcommittee joins community and school-based mentoring programs to improve the quality and quantity of mentor programs in Long Beach.

The School Joint Use Committee involves the Long Beach mayor, city manager, school superintendent, nonprofit and youth service providers, and the Parks, Recreation and Marine Department. The group manages the joint use of school and city facilities, including program scheduling, maintenance, development projects and grant opportunities that maximize the availability of city and school facilities for recreation programs.

The ASAP Subcommittee also partners with the school district in operating eight after-school programs on LBUSD campuses. The California Department of Education funded a proposal from LBUSD for \$20 million in Federal 21st Century Community Learning Center grants for these eight sites and 26 other sites run by local agencies serving youth.

The programs provide academic enrichment for children attending low-performing schools; offer instruction in drug and violence prevention, technology, art, music and recreation; and administer counseling services.

Collaborating with the Youth Services Network helped the Parks, Recreation and Marine Department to prioritize resources and create a recreation model for all residents with consistent programming in 24 parks. Park staffing was standardized, resulting in expanded service despite department budget reductions of approximately 30 percent.

Long Beach Looks to the Future

Jean Egan, chairperson of the Long Beach 2010 Plan Education/Youth Task Force, said, "Long Beach's desire to make the well-being of youth a priority will ensure our children's success, build strong neighborhoods and a safe city, and provide economic prosperity and a healthy environment."

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Text Page 2