Parks After Dark
Best Practices from City to County

California Parks and Recreation Society Annual Conference
March 12, 2015
Outline

I. Introduction (5 mins)

II. Agency Showcase (40 mins)

III. Public Health Policy & Measuring Success (10 mins)

IV. Group Activity: Adapting PAD to your community (10 mins)

V. Closing, Q&A (10 mins)
Introduction

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Director, Los Angeles County Department of Parks and Recreation

John Wicker
Deputy Director, Los Angeles County Department of Parks and Recreation

Mercy Santoro
Director, City of Pasadena Department of Human Services and Recreation
Developing the Program & Goals

- Strengthen neighborhoods
- Connect community members
- Provide fun and safe spaces to play and access services
- Secure funding and partners
- Building community will
- Improve health, safety, wellbeing
- Overview of City and County models
Large County Perspective: Los Angeles County Parks After Dark

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http://youtu.be/7u1wN8Fbg48
PAD: From Violence prevention to health promotion

- Began in Summer 2010
- Prevention strategy of Los Angeles County Gang Violence Reduction Initiative
- LA County Department of Parks and Recreation Program
- Collaborative effort: Public Health, Sheriff, other county agencies and CBOs
- Award winning
- Community Transformation Grant funded 2012-2014
A wide range of programs/services

Summer weekend evening programming
(Thurs – Sat, 6-10PM)

- Law enforcement: public safety and community engagement
- Outreach: health, wellness, social services
- Sports/exercise: soccer, basketball, walking clubs, organized bike rides, dance classes
- Educational classes: computers, arts and crafts, cooking
- Entertainment: movies, concerts
- Youth Councils, teen events
- Volunteers
PAD Parks and Homicide Rates by Zip Code in Los Angeles County, 2007-2011
Implementation

- Ongoing stakeholder engagement, align missions
- Define roles based on partner strengths
- Identify high need communities (high crime/violence, high obesity prevalence, low socio-economic status)
- Tailor to community needs and assets
- Encourage park staff input – they are eyes/ears of community
- Fund staffing infrastructure to coordinate
- Promote: social media, word of mouth, signage
- Evaluate
Challenges

Commitment and persistence

- Will this work? / identifying champions
- Lack of funding: square peg / competing priorities
- Need core infrastructure: staff to coordinate, evaluate
- Complex relationship building across sectors
- Community support / impact builds over time
- Intense for line staff during summer

Changing the frame

- Reconciling “summer program” & systems change
- Communicating the benefits of park “programs”
- Broad impact: violence prevention >> health promotion
Small City Perspective: Pasadena Parks After Dark

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Pasadena Parks After Dark

Overview/Model

- Began in 2012 in Partnership with the County of LA
- Initially 2 park sites and has since expanded to 3
- Realignment of existing resources
- Community/Council support / impact builds over time

Changing the frame

- Broad impact: violence prevention, connecting neighborhoods, promoting safety, and encouraging better health outcomes
Pasadena Parks After Dark

**Lead Agency & Partners**

- Human Services and Recreation, Police Department and Public Health
- LA County Parks and Recreation
- Expanding to include Levitt and Kidspace and other service providers
- Engage other non-profits who fund entertainment, meals and activities
Pasadena Parks After Dark

Communities

Sites vary from 2-4 days per week from 6-9 p.m. and 6-10 p.m.

- Special events, sporting/aquatics activities, nutrition and fitness classes

Teen Education Center

- Leadership and life skill development, skate jams, STEAM activities

Villa-Parke Community Center

- Gardening, boxing and ceramics

Robinson Park Recreation Center

- Live DJ during adult basketball and swim
Pasadena Parks After Dark

**Implementation**

- Involves youth employees, outreach workers, police officers, park rangers and recreation staff
- Tailor to community interests and age
- Activate parks from 7 a.m. to 10 p.m. for 6-7 weeks during summer
- Evaluation feedback used to inform programming
- Interest has widened based on marketing and quality of programming
- Promoted by word of mouth, signage, fliers and posters
Pasadena Parks After Dark

Outcomes

- Positive image of parks and park users who express favorable response to program
- Good will among participants and law enforcement
- City Council, City Manager and Police Chief articulate value of program
- Learned family open swim is more popular in evenings
- Observe more families recreating together
- Lead to expanded hours of service year round
Outcomes

Survey Results
- 86% participated in physical activity
- 87% felt safe attending PAD (deputy presence)
- 99% would participate again/recommend to a friend

Crime Trends
- Crime numbers similar 2012-2014; slight increases at some parks due to increased traffic stops
Medium City Perspective: Long Beach BE Safe

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Long Beach BE Safe

Overview/Model

- The California Endowment- Long Beach Building Healthy Communities
- Implemented in 2010
- One Long Beach Alliance
- Long Beach Summer Night Lights is a crime and violence reduction initiative targeting the traditionally most violent summer months. This initiative is focused on educating communities and implementing the best neighborhood-based strategies and practices to improve health and safety, prevent and counter “toxic stress”, and puts at-risk youngsters on a better path to success.
Long Beach BE Safe

Lead Convener & Partners

Centro CHA Inc.
Community Partners Council - CPC
Families in Good Health- Men With Meaningful Messages (EM3)
Black Families United
The Advancement Project - Urban Peace Academy
Boys and Girls Club of Long Beach
MAGIC Program
Victory Outreach of Long Beach
Interval House - Domestic Violence
Women Shelter of Long Beach
City of Long Beach Parks and Recreation

City of Long Beach Library Services
Long Beach Police Department
Jubilee Consortium
Helpline Youth Counseling
Downtown Associated Youth Services Network (DAYS)/Urban Community Outreach (UCO)
Pacific Gateway (PGWIN)
CSULB-Students of Social Work
Orange County Credit Union
Los Cerritos Wetlands Trust
Long Beach Health Department

www.facebook.com/LBSNL
Long Beach BE Safe Implementation

Increase city-wide understanding in violence prevention efforts (law-enforcement, government agencies, non-profit organizations, local businesses, schools, stakeholders, decision makers, youth, parents/adult community residents)

Promote leadership, volunteer, social-economic, and employment opportunities for Youth, Parents and Adult residents

Increase accessibility and safety to parks, schools, youth centers, buss stops, train stations, etc. (safe passages initiatives “Turn Up The Lights”, promote community policing models/intervention workers, expanded park programs, etc.)

Fostering coalitions and networks for greater impact (LB GRIP, VPC of LA, BHC Workgroups, Youth Services Network, Neighborhood Park Councils etc.)

Changing organizational practices to improve health and safety (building partnerships between police, public health dept. and other city services, raise awareness of early intervention strategies proven to reduce violence, and support better practices to address “toxic stress”)

Advocate for city policies, budgets and better practices to support youth development and violence prevention (City of Long Beach Violence Prevention Plan, gun control laws, federal funding, etc.)
Long Beach BE Safe

Targeted Changes - Outcomes

1. Preventing Violence and Injury
2. Supporting Healthy Food & Activity Environments
3. Improving Environments for Health & Health Equity
5. Promoting Mental Health & Well Being
6. Job Creation
Long Beach BE Safe

Challenges

- Funding and line budget allocation from local City Government to support better summer safety strategy practices to address “toxic stress” in communities. Lack of political will to adopt a comprehensive summer safety strategy.

- Minimal capacity to track and analyze data for Be Safe Initiative

- Ineffective policies and systems that contribute to poor health outcomes for low income communities and further perpetuate the “pipeline-to-prison” specifically for young males of color.

- Effective year-round strategy - with preventative approaches driven by proven data- to better support crime reduction – community development initiative.
Large City Perspective:
Los Angeles Summer Night Lights

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Los Angeles Summer Night Lights

The Office of Gang Reduction & Youth Development (GRYD) was established in 2007 as a single office to oversee the implementation of a comprehensive strategy in the communities most impacted by gang violence.

**Summer Night Lights**

- Piloted in 2008 at 1 housing development and 7 recreation centers
- Based on previous summer programs *At the Park After Dark*, and *Summer of Success* (SOS)
- Since its inception, program has expanded to 32 sites
- Integrates prevention, intervention, and community engagement
- Engages **ALL** stakeholders along the family life cycle
- Focuses on behavior rather than identify
- Provides tangible community resources as a means for reducing violence
Los Angeles Summer Night Lights

- Mayor’s Office of Gang Reduction & Youth Development (GRYD)
- Los Angeles Police Department
- Department of Recreation & Parks
- GRYD Foundation (Fiscal Agent)
- Private Funding Partners (Foundations/Corporate/Individuals)
- Hungry Hog (Food Directors)
- GRYD Agencies (Prevention & Intervention)
- LAUSD
- CBO’s/FBO’s/local community members
- City Departments
Los Angeles Summer Night Lights

Over 4.2 million youth and families have participated in SNL programming offered free of charge

- 25% of families residing in an SNL community live below the poverty line

2.67 million meals served, with healthy meal options and fresh produce

- 58% of residents living in an SNL neighborhood are characterized as overweight or obese

Over 7,330 jobs created, including 1,861 youth hired

- Average SNL community unemployment rate of 6.6%

Seven consecutive summers of violence reduction in and around the SNL sites

- SNL community youth (ages 15-24) homicide death rate 45% higher than the LA county average (38 per 100,000 youth)
Los Angeles Summer Night Lights

Extended & Expanded programming
Programming includes youth and adult-centered, athletic, recreational, educational and artistic activities.

Youth Squad
Eleven youth between the ages of 17-24 are hired as Youth Squad members at each site, & receive job and life skills training prior to and during the program.

Community Intervention/ Cease Fire
Community Intervention Workers are hired to engage in proactive peace-keeping activities as well as violence interruption strategies throughout the SNL program.

Law Enforcement & Community Engagement
Law enforcement presence consists of active participation and interaction with all community members in activities beyond suppression.
Los Angeles Summer Night Lights

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statistic</th>
<th>Value</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Visits Made to All 32 SNL Sites</td>
<td>901,253</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total Meals Served</td>
<td>563,283</td>
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<tr>
<td>Local Employment Opportunities Created</td>
<td>1,068</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reduction in Gang-Related Violence</td>
<td>15.4%</td>
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“SNL has not only made me feel comfortable to go to my neighborhood park but it has also made me feel like a part of my community.”

SNL Participant
Los Angeles Summer Night Lights

- Expand local partnerships as it relates to program & hiring outreach, and resource delivery at sites

- Identify additional physical activity programming to further encourage female participation

- Further development of school/educational themed programming and resources during programming nights after school has started

- Incorporate additional linkages and partnerships that will support SNL Youth Squad members success beyond the summer

- Continue to engage private foundations, individual donors, and corporate sponsors to secure multi-year funding commitments, in-kind contributions, and programmatic partnerships
Public Health Policy & Measuring Success

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Parks After Dark is a model practice for advancing health equity

- Decreases violence
- Promotes physical activity >> chronic disease
- Improves social cohesion >> mental health
- Builds community trust
- Links community members with services
- Is cost effective
- Provides a framework for serving disadvantaged communities countywide
Parks After Dark Model of Collaboration

**Dept. of Public Health**
PAD Health Promotion Coordinator

**Dept. of Parks and Recreation**
PAD Park Administration Coordinator

**Sheriff's Dept.**
Parks Bureau Deputies

**Mental Health**

**Probation**

**Health Services**

**Human Relations**

**Education**

**Library**

**Child and Family Services**

**Public Defender**

**Social Services**

**Arts Commission**

**Local Business**

**CBOs & FBOs**

**PAD PARKS**

**COMMUNITY**

- Chronic Disease
- Mental Health
- Violence
- Access to Services
- Trust and Resilience
- Civic Engagement
- Social Cohesion
- Family Bonding
Increased physical activity

Expanding PAD to 16 sites could save 3 premature deaths from cardiovascular disease each year.

- 16,000 physical activity participants in 2013
- 78% of PAD participants engaged in physical activity during PAD, including residents who indicated a sedentary lifestyle.
- This translates into a 5% decrease in the burden of diabetes, dementia, and heart disease based on year-round weekly participation in PAD physical activities.
Decreased crime

Deputies + social connections fostered by PAD made the community safer

- Between 2009 and 2013, 32% decrease in serious and violent crime in the 3 original PAD parks vs 18% increase in comparison parks in neighboring communities.
  - Average of 14 fewer serious and violent crimes per summer in the immediate vicinity of parks where PAD has operated for four years

- **2009 - 2014: 48% decrease at original PAD parks**
- 91% of respondents felt safe @ PAD
PAD is cost effective

The estimated annual criminal justice cost savings at the original three parks alone were one and-a-half times the cost to implement PAD at all six parks in 2013, including the additional cost of incorporating HIA recommendations.
Benefits of Safe Summer Park Strategies

Park staff = community liaisons & public health ambassadors

- Safe and welcoming space; facilities
- High attendance and community support
- Community wants more resources

Flexible model to advance partners’ missions

- Builds strong network of collaboration
- High impact across a range of outcomes / cost effective
- Gaining attention as evidence-based practice
- Targets disadvantaged communities
- Leverage funding resources in other sectors
Group Activity (10 minutes)

How can PAD be adapted to your community?
Session Closing

- Role of parks in public health model – putting policy into action
- Promoting healthy city initiatives
- Aligning programs/partners to engage community
- Re-invigorate your summer activities after hours
- Building on your jurisdiction’s strengths
- Advancing a countywide and national model
Q & A (10 minutes)
Additional Resources

- Parks After Dark Turns Parks into Safe Havens that Promote Community Cohesion and Healthy Physical Activity (2014)

- Institute of Medicine: Safe Summer Parks Programs Reduce Violence and Promote Health in Los Angeles County (2014)
  - http://iom.edu/Global/Perspectives/2014/SafeSummerParks.aspx

- Potential Costs and Health Benefits of Parks After Dark: A Rapid Health Impact Assessment (2014)
  - http://ph.lacounty.gov/ivpp/

Additional Resources

- Voice Waves, Long Beach: *Summer Night Lights Comes Back to Long Beach Parks (2013)*
  - [http://voicewaves.org/2013/05/summer-night-lights-comes-back-to-lb-parks/](http://voicewaves.org/2013/05/summer-night-lights-comes-back-to-lb-parks/)

- Long Beach Gazette: *Summer Night Lights Provides Youth, Families with Safe Fun (2012)*

- **2012 Summer Night Lights Schedule**
  - [http://www.bhclongbeach.org/2012/07/12/summer-night-lights-2012-has-launched/](http://www.bhclongbeach.org/2012/07/12/summer-night-lights-2012-has-launched/)

- Long Beach Press Telegram: *Summer Night Lights Program Targets Kids in Long Beach (2011)*
Additional Resources


- Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention: *Best Practices to Address Community Gang Problems*
  - [https://www.ncjrs.gov/pdffiles1/ojjdp/222799.pdf](https://www.ncjrs.gov/pdffiles1/ojjdp/222799.pdf)