

Background Re: 2008 Citizen Survey

The District regularly conducts a community-wide, formal, scientific survey through the University of Illinois College of Medicine to determine from a random sampling of citizens current and proposed policies in order to guide strategic planning. Our elected Board of Commissioners and staff use the results of this information to set priorities in allocating funding - what services will be provided, for which group(s) of people, at what cost.

In 2008 when this citizen survey was conducted, there were specific questions concerning the District's role in outdoor education and nature experiences - should this be something we continue to invest in, should it be expanded, or transitioned elsewhere (someone else provide it).

The response was highly favorable to continue and expand this effort with children (see attached survey information).

2008 Citizen Survey re: Environmental Education, outdoor programs

- There is strong support (90%) for the RPD to offer outdoor environmental education programs and provide places for children to explore and learn about nature
- Programs about community beautification and conservation by the RPD are supported by 85%
- 85% agreed the RPD should play a role in creating a health community with efforts to improve health and fitness, keeping kids "out of trouble," and reducing crime
- Four in five (82%) feel positive about the RPD participating in environmental initiatives of recycling, alternative energy use, and reducing pesticides/herbicides

Priority Result III

Residents value recreation as essential for a healthy life.

RPD plays a leadership role in giving residents a balanced, healthy lifestyle, including the value of leisure skill development, beautification, conservation, and environmental education in reducing unhealthy behaviors and building healthy families and a healthy community.

Leave no child inside

Last April (2008), the Park District hosted a luncheon with guest speaker Dr. Cheryl Charles, who spoke on the importance of "leave no child inside."

She spoke about the importance of reconnecting our youth with nature and the outdoors.

Research is powerfully suggestive that there is a relationship between nature exposure and reduced symptoms of ADD; that lack of exposure plays a role in childhood obesity, and that time in nature can help quell symptoms of depression.

Environmental Education

We have 3,239 youth who have benefited from these programs so far this year, 3,040 last year, so we're seeing an increasing participation.

For camps, Nature Quest is close to 900 children, and resident camp Lone Oak has 426 participants.

We're offering family programs to experience nature together like Winter Wanderings and Fabulous Fall Fun Day.

Partnerships with Pheasants 4-ever and North West Turkey Federation

Snowmobile safety program – 250 students under the age of 16

2008 Citizen Survey Indicators

In order of agreement

1. Preservation of existing parks (99%)
2. Outdoor environmental education and places to explore nature (90%)
3. Maintain parks and facilities; invest in ongoing maintenance (88%)
4. Natural areas, preservation, wildlife habitat (88%)
5. Support museums/culture/education for quality of life issues (86%)
6. Beautification, planting trees, conservation (85%)
7. Healthy community initiatives (improving health and fitness, keeping kids "out of trouble," reducing crime) (85%)
8. Greening initiatives (recycling, alternative fuels, helping environment) (82%)
9. Offer some free programs as benefit for paying taxes (82%)
10. Teach lifetime sports skills (76%)
11. Partnerships in service delivery (76%)
12. Require developers to set aside land for parks (76%)
13. Tourism and economic benefit to community (75%)
14. Link paths together in current system (71%)
15. Acquisition of new parks (70%)
16. Provide parks within reasonable walking distance of most homes (70%)
17. Develop Rock River riverfront with government partners (65%)
18. Provide financial assistance for low income families (58%)
19. Provide programs/services addressing childhood issues i.e., truancy, obesity (53%)