# City of Richmond

# Report to Committee

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| **To:** | Parks, Recreation and Cultural Services Committee | **Date:** | February 13, 2003 |
| **From:** | Kate Sparrow Director Recreation and Cultural Services | **File:** | 3425-01 |
| **Re:** | **Delivery of Youth Recreation Services** | | |

## Staff Recommendation

1. That the report reviewing the delivery of recreation and cultural services to youth and the role of community youth workers, RCMP and School Liaisons in provision of services, be received for information.

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Kate Sparrow
Director Recreation and Cultural Services

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**Staff Report**

Origin

The Parks, Recreation and Cultural Services Committee referral from January 28, 2003, requested staff to review:

- the delivery of recreation and cultural services to the alienated youth of the community through the recreation facilities and community centres; and
- the role of community youth workers, the RCMP, and school liaisons and the provision of services to all segments of youth in our society.

Analysis

Services for Alienated Youth

The delivery of youth recreation services to alienated youth represents the city's ability to connect to and support a demographic unlikely to use the public service by conventional means. The notion of "alienated" youth suggests that these youth experience a level of isolation due to a combination of behavioural and life problems. Thus, any hopes at engaging these youth requires an approach that is flexible enough to deal with problems first and making activity a secondary priority, emphasizing the need for these steps to mutually support each other.

RCMP, teachers, psychologists, social workers and probation officers most often are on the front line to identifying problems. Depending on the severity of the problem, the long term management of the youth would benefit from their participation in positive outlets associated with recreation and cultural pursuits. Currently, staff working in the City's youth outreach pilot project are best positioned to bridge their participation. This may take the form of 1-1 mentoring, group participation or linkages to other youth recreation activity in the city. Outreach workers can then begin to address common deficiencies such as academic achievement, life skills, self-esteem and sense of connection and purpose to a broader community. Youth workers in the community centers fill a supportive role in being able to further provide positive peer environments through activity, volunteerism or late night activity.

The City's Youth Recreation Services supports the framework of Developmental Asset Building (attachment 1). These critical factors to healthy adolescent development were created as benchmarks to measure the number of supports present or lacking in the day to day lives of children and youth. Research shows that the greater number of assets youth have, the less likely they are to engage in high-risk behaviours. Conversely, youth with fewer assets are much more likely to use drugs, abuse alcohol and engage in a slippery slope of criminal activity. The value

of prevention and asset building in crime reduction are well documented.[1] The emotional toll on families and financial burden on the criminal justice system is remarkable.[2]

The project quantitatively measures the number of casual contacts, 1-1 and group work. The nature of recreation based outreach balances the investment of the time spent with the individual in 1-1 settings, while also facilitating youth involvement with small groups. A conventional measure of participation such as number of user visits offers comparative data with facility based recreation usage. More importantly, the focus of youth outreach is to impact individual behaviour and attitude from negative to positive.

The City's Youth Outreach workers have observed behavioural changes in youth during the past year in their interactions with youth. Increase in rate and frequency of participation, decreased truancy a nd f eeling o f b elonging i n t he c ommunity reflect s ome o f t he p ersonal c hanges t hat youth in the outreach project have achieved.

The capacity to migrate youth through a system of referrals requires an open and coordinated effort between organizations to communicate and meet the needs of these youth where needed. A common vision and intent to direct policy, practice and resources to this are critical to success. Lack of coordination increases the likelihood that youth will not have access to the benefits of recreation. The systems that deliver youth services needs to have an accountability to basic principles of youth development to ensure that young people have suitable places to go, people to talk to and possibilities to explore what they want to do.


Community Center Youth Workers

Community center based youth workers are employed by the community associations with annual funding from the City to cover a portion of their salaries. The general role of the facility based youth worker is to provide a broad scope of opportunities for youth within the center. The core activity areas are: sports/fitness, arts &culture, leadership, volunteerism, work experience, late nights. They also manage a variety of dedicated and multi-use spaces for youth within each center.

Fundamental to all youth activity is the goal of creating safe, inviting places for all youth. Safe places can occur through activity, through peer or adult interactions, or any place the youth happens to be while in any of the city's facilities. A youth's perception of safety is determined by factors such as the ability to just be somewhere without being hassled, to be somewhere with friends, to be seen somewhere away from intrusive authority figures. Youth workers constantly battle this perception as community centers can be none of these things to youth if the inputs to create such environments are compromised.

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[1] Youth recreation projects in Fort Myers, Florida, and Norfolk, Virginia provides learning and recreational opportunities are estimated to have reduced juvenile crime and vandalism by 30% in Fort Myers a nd b y 2 9% in N orfolk. w ww.fightcrime.org . In S toke, U K "at risk" y outh w ere i nvolved i n mainstream-the evaluation of the program showed significant reductions in recorded crime. In Ottawa, the PALS (Participate and Learn Skills) community project provided youth with a range of activities. An evaluation showed cost savings in reduced vandalism, police time and fire costs.

[2] Professor Mark A. Cohen of Vanderbilt University estimates that for each high-risk youth prevented from adopting a life of crime, the country would save $1.7 million (USD).

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RCMP Youth Section

The goal of the RCMP's recently renamed, Youth Section, is to work within the schools and community to prevent, suppress and enforce unlawful violations and to act as a liaison between students, school staff, the RCMP and the City's youth services. The officers selected to the Youth T eam f acilitate p roblem o riented p olicing i nitiatives i n b oth e lementary a nd se condary schools through education, leadership, guidance and enforcement. Strategies are developed with students and key community supports to resolve problems that negatively impact on the safety and quality of life in schools and the community. The six members of the youth section can also provide crucial links to counselling professionals for youth and their families, educational seminars for groups and 1-1 work where needed. One member of the team has been assigned to liaise with the City for related policing, risk management and contingency planning and issue solving where the need to support respective work is required.
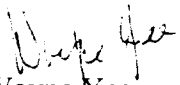
The City's youth outreach workers have been introduced to RCMP members at watch briefings in order to familiarize police with these outreach services. This gives the officers another resource to refer youth for assistance or to suggest alternative things to do for the youth that they encounter during patrols.

Financial Impact

The funding for the Youth Outreach workers has been requested by the Recreation and Cultural Services Department as an additional level budget item to the City's 2003 operating budget.

Conclusion

Youth development through recreation services has recognized potential and increasing support from multi-disciplinary organizations. Participation in recreation can shift the odds in favour of youth making good life choices. Though seen as a leader in youth services, Richmond has yet to reach a greater potential in engaging y oung people in more meaningful and supported places. Developing a continuum of a responsive service that reaches all segments of the youth in the community will build the city's capacity to create safe, healthy environments for youth.

Wayne Yee
Coordinator, Youth Recreation Services
(4110)

Attachment 1

## *40 Developmental Assets*

Search Institute has identified the following building blocks of healthy
development that help young people grow up healthy, caring, and responsible.

| Category | Asset Name and Definition |
|---|---|
| **External Assets** | |
| Support | 1. **Family Support**-Family life provides high levels of love and support. <br> 2. **Positive Family Communication**-Young person and her or his parent(s) communicate positively, and young person is willing to seek advice and counsel from parents. <br> 3. **Other Adult Relationships**-Young person receives support from three or more nonparent adults. <br> 4. **Caring Neighborhood**-Young person experiences caring neighbors. <br> 5. **Caring School Climate**-School provides a caring, encouraging environment. <br> 6. **Parent Involvement in Schooling**-Parent(s) are actively involved in helping young person succeed in school. |
| Empowerment | 7. **Community Values Youth**-Young person perceives that adults in the community value youth. <br> 8. **Youth as Resources**-Young people are given useful roles in the community. <br> 9. **Service to Others**-Young person serves in the community one hour or more per week. <br> 10. **Safety**-Young person feels safe at home, school, and in the neighborhood. |
| Boundaries & Expectations | 11. **Family Boundaries**-Family has clear rules and consequences and monitors the young person's whereabouts. <br> 12. **School Boundaries**-School provides clear rules and consequences. <br> 13. **Neighborhood Boundaries**-Neighbors take responsibility for monitoring young people's behavior. <br> 14. **Adult Role Models**-Parent(s) and other adults model positive, responsible behavior. <br> 15. **Positive Peer Influence**-Young person's best friends model responsible behavior. <br> 16. **High Expectations**-Both parent(s) and teachers encourage the young person to do well. |
| Constructive Use of Time | 17. **Creative Activities**-Young person spends three or more hours per week in lessons or practice in music, theater, or other arts. <br> 18. **Youth Programs**-Young person spends three or more hours per week in sports, clubs, or organizations at school and/or in the community. <br> 19. **Religious Community**-Young person spends one or more hours per week in activities in a religious institution. <br> 20. **Time at Home**-Young person is out with friends "with nothing special to do" two or fewer nights per week. |
| **Internal Assets** | |
| Commitment to Learning | 21. **Achievement Motivation**-Young person is motivated to do well in school. <br> 22. **School Engagement**-Young person is actively engaged in learning. <br> 23. **Homework**-Young person reports doing at least one hour of homework every school day. <br> 24. **Bonding to School**-Young person cares about her or his school. <br> 25. **Reading for Pleasure**-Young person reads for pleasure three or more hours per week. |
| Positive Values | 26. **Caring**-Young person places high value on helping other people. <br> 27. **Equality and Social Justice**-Young person places high value on promoting equality and reducing hunger and poverty. <br> 28. **Integrity**-Young person acts on convictions and stands up for her or his beliefs. <br> 29. **Honesty**-Young person "tells the truth even when it is not easy." <br> 30. **Responsibility**-Young person accepts and takes personal responsibility. <br> 31. **Restraint**-Young person believes it is important not to be sexually active or to use alcohol or other drugs. |
| Social Competencies | 32. **Planning and Decision Making**-Young person knows how to plan ahead and make choices. <br> 33. **Interpersonal Competence**-Young person has empathy, sensitivity, and friendship skills. <br> 34. **Cultural Competence**-Young person has knowledge of and comfort with people of different cultural/racial/ethnic backgrounds. <br> 35. **Resistance Skills**-Young person can resist negative peer pressure and dangerous situations. <br> 36. **Peaceful Conflict Resolution**-Young person seeks to resolve conflict nonviolently. |
| Positive Identity | 37. **Personal Power**-Young person feels he or she has control over "things that happen to me." <br> 38. **Self-Esteem**-Young person reports having a high self-esteem. <br> 39. **Sense of Purpose**-Young person reports that "my life has a purpose." <br> 40. **Positive View of Personal Future**-Young person is optimistic about her or his personal future. |