

Testimony of  
Susan Slawson, First Deputy Commissioner  
Department of Parks and Recreation  
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Councilman Jones and Members of the Special Committee on Criminal Justice Reform: I am Susan Slawson, First Deputy Commissioner for the Parks and Recreation Department, and accompanying me today is Terri Kerwawich, Program Director for Parks & Recreation. Thank you for the chance to share with the Committee the youth opportunities our Department offers.

Parks and Recreation offers a myriad of activities focused on youth to fulfill part of our mission which is to help Philadelphia's children and other residents grow by connecting them to the natural world, to each other, and to fun, physical and social opportunities.

I will highlight three areas in my remarks today.

**1. Programs & Activities:** Over 700 educational and cultural programs are offered for youth each year. They are offered in neighborhoods throughout the city at 150 recreation centers and playgrounds as well as at 143 neighborhood parks. The majority of our youth program activities are captured in the following categories: After School Program, Tot Rec Program, Summer Camps, Arts & Culture, and Sports and Athletics. In addition, we partner with various organizations from law firms to the Girl Scouts to offer an additional 1,600 events and programs. For example,

- We partnered with the Ed Snider Youth Hockey Foundation to provide seven-day a week ice-skating program.
- During our 2015 8-week summer pool season we offered almost 15,000 swim lessons and well over 800,000 visit to our pools.
- We hosted three youth triathlons and decathlons with over 120 young people participating.
- In addition, PPR is the largest service provider of Out-of-School Time programming for youth in Philadelphia, serving upwards of 10,000 annually in afterschool (REACH) and summer camp programs. Programming focuses on five wellness areas (fitness and healthy habits, environmental awareness, outdoor activities, sports and athletics and the arts), with success measured by participant connectedness to peers and staff/volunteers.
- Every year we host Neighborhood Day Camps that are offered 5 days a week, 6 hours per day for 6 weeks. In addition, we offer specialty camps at 40 locations that are focused on rowing, visual and performing arts, the environment and special needs camps. Last summer over 1,500 youth participated in these camps.

- Residents can find all of these opportunities and more on our website. They can start with our facility and camp websites which helps residents find programs of interest and when and where they are happening. <http://www.phila.gov/parksandrecreation/findafacility/> Or <http://www.phila.gov/ParksandRecreation/programsandactivities/Pages/Camps.aspx>

**2. Workforce Development Programs:** Philadelphia Parks & Recreation operates a citywide Workforce Program that connects thousands of youth and young adults to seasonal opportunities, internships and employment annually. We offer over 700 positions to youth in summer and year-round work experience opportunities. For example,

- The **Career Advancement Project (CAP)** is a three step industry pipeline model designed to connect youth and young adults (14-24) to permanent careers. CAP aims to prepare youth for public sector employment within Parks and Recreation, the City of Philadelphia or a related industry. The nine-month work experience will provide career exposure programming through customized career pathways designed to build skills and support project based learning. Youth and young adults will receive a six to nine-month seasonal position within the department and transition through a pathway that provides: **access** to information related to the parks and recreation industry, **exposure** to career pathways within the department (PPR), and a structured service driven **experience** promoting servant leadership.
- The **Center for Employment Opportunities (CEO)** is a 501c3 that provides comprehensive employment services to men and women with recent criminal convictions. Parks & Recreation along with State and philanthropic funding has partnered with CEO to pilot a program in Philadelphia for 400 individuals (ages 18-25) over two years. The pilot is in its first year and to date 64 participants have been trained and worked on a transitional job site and 20 have verified full-time unsubsidized job placements.
- In addition, we support the WorkReady program, which is the city-wide strategy designed to coordinate year-round and summer work experiences for young people ages 14-21, by providing program funding as well worksites for WorkReady participants.
- For example, residents can visit our website to find out about lifeguard positions:  
See  
[http://www.phila.gov/ParksandRecreation/getinvolved/Pages/Lifeguard CPR Training.aspx](http://www.phila.gov/ParksandRecreation/getinvolved/Pages/Lifeguard_CPR_Training.aspx)

**3. Summer Meals:** There are over 1,000 sites that serve free summer meals and snacks to youth ages 18 and under, as well as students 19 and older enrolled in a qualifying school program. These sites may be found at recreation centers, parks, churches, and even on neighborhood blocks. No ID or registration is required. For instance, in calendar year 2015, PPR served 2,874,842 meals during the summer and 374,452 during after school programs.

We applaud City Council for seeking to unpack the strategies and activities City government offers for youth during the summer. I am happy to answer any questions you have.