



Date: November 7, 2003

TO: Board Members - Parks and Recreation
FROM: General Manager - Parks and Recreation
SUBJECT: ParkPartners Program

RECOMMENDATION

THAT this report be received for information.

BACKGROUND

The Park Board established the ParkPartners Program in June 2002 - see Appendix A, and directed that staff report to the Board in the Fall of 2003, with an evaluation of the accomplishments of the program.

DISCUSSION

The ParkPartners Program is focused on expanding volunteering in parks either through existing partner organizations or through new opportunities presented by our Parks. After the official launch of the program on October 30th, 2002, staff have spent the last year on a variety of tasks to improve both the public awareness of the program and through direct contacts with citizens and organizations helping to develop ideas and to implement them within our Park Board system.

Staff developed a communications strategy and various communication tools that have assisted in making people and staff aware of the program. An audio visual presentation, brochures and information displays have been included at various workshops, at various Park Board facilities, and elsewhere describing our interest in hearing about new ideas for activities, events and new approaches to park issues and concerns. These tools also include direct contact phone numbers for staff in each District who are prepared to work with community interests. Our website also contains a program description and contact information.

Our communication strategy also included expanding awareness of the program through workshops with our staff and our existing partners. Valuable feedback received at these sessions has assisted us in developing our strategies to strengthen the program in 2004.

We have measured our first year's success in three different areas:

- **Number of inquiries and referrals:**
over our three Districts more than 65 inquiries/referrals have been dealt with;
- **Number of contacts involved in stewardship development:**
when inquiries progress into more detailed discussions, staff have met with individuals and groups to explore their ideas further. More than 55 contacts were made under this category; and
- **Number of project volunteers:**
throughout the three Districts approximately 110 new volunteers have been involved in either specific Park Board activities or have been referred to our existing partner organizations.

Activities for 2004

This program has sparked interest in the Community in its first year but staff are aware that we need to continue to publicize the Program and support those who participate.

Staff plan to:

- a) Continue the development and distribution of communication pieces on various aspects of the program.
- b) Develop an Annual ParkPartners Newsletter to talk about successes and recognize the contributors to the program.
- c) Initiate an Annual Ideas Fair to profile both opportunities for partnering at the Park Board and through other partners and to encourage new ideas for programs and activities.
- d) Improve our ParkPartners Program portion of the website.
- e) Collect a small inventory of common tools/supplies that support volunteers and our partners in their activities .

Funding of \$20,000 was approved when the program was initiated and these activities/resources will be covered by this funding.

SUMMARY

The ParkPartners Program launched in October 2002, has had many successes in its first year. Staff are planning a number of activities in 2004 to expand the public's awareness of the program and increase the support to and recognition of those who participate in the volunteer activities under the Program.

Prepared by:

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