

Benefits of Youth and Family Programming

In the simplest of terms, every municipal recreation program provided by a city has a surmised “value” to the participant and/or society. Generally speaking, these values can be placed into three general and broad categories wherein:

- 1) Some value is obtained directly by the participant, who can afford to pay for the program. For example, programs where an adult who can afford to pay for the program learns a new skill or craft, and where little value is obtained by society (this is equivalent to Costa Mesa’s Cost Recovery category of “self-supporting programs”); or
- 2) The value is slightly more community-oriented, wherein the participant as well as some of society obtains some value from the program’s offering, and therefore the program is financially supported in part by society. Many times, participants in this category may not be able to pay a high fee for participation. For example, many youth-oriented programs are of this nature. Youth benefit directly, and society benefits indirectly by having youth engaged in and learning appropriate behavior as opposed to inappropriate behavior (equivalent to the City’s “mostly supported” and “partially supported” Cost Recovery categories); or
- 3) The program offers a substantial value to both the participants in the program as well as society as a whole. For example, after school programs and/or public education. Youth are engaged in appropriate behavior, as opposed to inappropriate and destructive behavior, learn important societal values and necessary skills that will enable them to grow into healthy and productive adults. Society as a whole benefits by youth having access to these programs. Since these programs are for the greater good of society as a whole, these programs are usually supported in full, at minimal or no cost to the participants (this is the City’s “fully supported” Cost Recovery category).

Depending upon the surmised value of a program to the community, fees and charges are developed to offset the expenses the municipal recreation department incurs to provide the program. All Costa Mesa Recreation Division programs are placed into a category within the Costa Mesa City Council-approved “Cost Recovery Program for Recreation Activities.” This determines the participation fees that will be charged to offset program costs.

As published in the May 2002 Kansas State Collegian and titled “Family Values - A Thing of The Past: Intimacy, Emotions Lacking in Today’s Households”, the following excerpt gives an example of how important it is for families to have time together:

In 1995, professor for the Institute of Childhood Development at the University of Minnesota L. Alan Sroufe conducted a series of studies involving behavioral organization, behavioral functions in individuals, and

early behavioral development to determine why families grow apart over time.

Based on his studies Sroufe stated “if a family is close and participates in activities together, showing love and affection toward all members of that family, then the children of that family will have few problems expressing emotion and displaying close intimacy levels compared to a family with little or no outside activities.”

The Family Night Out program brings people together, often strangers to one another, to interact within the framework of a fun, organized recreational activity, and they get to know each other a little better. The program therefore helps to bring about a community benefit by providing opportunities for community members, families, and cultures to come together.