



The City of
SAN DIEGO



October 13, 2021

THE CITY OF SAN DIEGO | PARKS AND RECREATION DEPARTMENT

SAN DIEGO PARKS FOUNDATION

Come Play Outside 2021

Background

Come Play Outside began as a response to the long-term COVID-19 pandemic closure that started in March 2020 and continued into the first half of 2021. During this time, many public facing amenities such as parks, schools, recreational amenities, programs, and aquatic facilities in the City of San Diego saw temporary closure due to public health orders related to the COVID-19 pandemic. The Parks and Recreation Department continued to maintain and sanitize parks, and recreational staff were redeployed to assist with these efforts. With the uncertainty the pandemic brought, many staff left the Department for a variety of personal reasons, including elder care, childcare, and overall concerns for health and safety.

Park closures during the pandemic resulted in youth remaining indoors at their homes, which resulted in a significant decrease of physical and social activity. Recognizing this, and to help reopen parks and welcome the community back to the City's recreational programs, Mayor Todd Gloria created the "Summer for All of Us" initiative, which included Come Play Outside and Back to Work SD. This program targeted youth in historically underserved communities, identified as communities of concern in the 2019 Climate Equity Index. Department staff focused efforts on 21 recreation centers and pools based on this data.

Funding and Partnerships

Specific funding allocations and in-kind contributions included:

- Fiscal Year 2022 budget allocations of \$400,000 for Come Play Outside and \$250,000 for Back to Work SD, a youth employment, internship, and mentorship program
- County of San Diego Health and Human Services Agency (HHSA) in cooperation with Board of Supervisors Chair Nathan Fletcher (District 4) in the amount of \$750,000
- Price Philanthropies Foundation
- San Diego Parks Foundation

With these partnerships, community-based organizations and service providers came together with the City and County to make Come Play Outside a success.

Programming

The Come Play Outside program focused on expanded programming over the summer at 21 recreation centers and aquatic centers in San Diego's most underserved communities, which are located in Council Districts 3, 4, 7, 8, and 9. It focused on providing funding for a variety of equitable programs and events connecting youth with the outdoors, promoting mental and physical health and wellness, and culturally relevant programs and activities. Come Play Outside programs included swim and lifeguard classes, recreational classes, adventure camps, teen nite, movies in the park, and the Fern Street Circus. These programs began in May-June 2021, right as the Department reopened many of its recreational facilities for public use.

To ensure successful implementation of Come Play Outside within this timeframe, the Department needed to overcome multiple factors:

- Attrition and rehiring of staff, as many job classifications including recreation leaders and pool guards saw vacancy rates between 20% and 30%
- Implementation of COVID-19 safety measures for park patrons and employees, such as signage, social distancing, face coverings, sanitation practices and stations, and additional cleanings
- Connection and contract development with multiple recreation service providers
- Receipt of non-City funds and development of process to securely utilize these funds for the program elements
- Staff training on these measures

Within a month, Department staff, led by Program Manager Sarah Erazo, developed and coordinated a summer full of fun activities and events. These began in June 2021 and ended in December 2021. Over 340 classes and camps were scheduled across 21 sites, including 120 teen nights at 15 locations, 30 movies in the park, 30 seasonal community events and seven (7) Fern Street Circus and Maraya Dance Performance events.

While the primary goal was to utilize the funds over the course of the summer season, there was still an adequate amount remaining to continue supporting equitable programs and events into fall and winter of Fiscal Year 2022.

Goals and Outcomes

Outreach for all programs and events was targeted at 15,000 children, adolescents, and young adults. With assistance from the Mayor's office, Council offices, the County, San Diego Parks Foundation and Price Philanthropies in getting the word out about this exciting new opportunity, the Come Play Outside program was able to engage with over 16,500 participants, exceeding the 15,000 goal.

| Program | Funding allocated | Funding expended | # of Participating Sites | Target Attendance | Actual Attendance |
|----------------------------|-------------------|------------------|------------------------------|-------------------|-------------------|
| Outdoor Adventure Camp | \$110,300 | \$41,692 | 16 Recreation Centers | 320 | 314 |
| Teen Nite | \$42,000 | \$42,000 | 15 Recreation Centers | 6,747 | 6,394 |
| Learn to Swim | \$43,881 | \$7,941 | 5 Pools | 500 | 602 |
| Junior Pool Guard | \$65,344 | \$53,720 | 5 Pools | 48 | 559 |
| Fern Street Circus | \$20,300 | \$20,300 | 7 Community Parks | 2,100 | 1,445 |
| Movies in the Park | \$22,400 | \$22,165 | 21 Parks & Pools (30 movies) | 2,100 | 4,900 |
| Flexible Programs & Events | \$400,000 | \$178,429 | 17 Recreation Centers | 3,185 | 2,646 |
| | | | Totals | 15,000 | 16,680 |

Three programs that far exceeded the target attendance were the Learn to Swim classes, Junior Pool Guard program and the Movies in the Park. These programs and events are typically very popular, with the aquatic's programs filling to capacity across the city and movies in the park well attended by families. While the Outdoor

Adventure Camp, Teen Nite, Fern Street Circus, and flexible programs fell just shy of their target attendance, they still present great success with the outcome achieved.

One of the key measures of the Come Play Outside program was satisfaction surveys. With the help of the Performance and Analytics Department, over 4,000 surveys were distributed to program participants. Of the 585 surveys that were completed by participants and caregivers, the Come Play Outside programs received an overall satisfaction rate of 92%.

Challenges

There were many challenges faced as we navigated such unprecedented times:

- The Department had never shut down recreation centers and pools for the length of time resulting from the pandemic
- Staffing levels were at an all-time low when facilities began to reopen
- The Come Play Outside, Summer for All of Us funding was the first of its kind that the Department had received for programming and events
- The Department and the County had two months to execute an inter-agency agreement, obtain Mayoral action to receive County grant, schedule programs, and secure contracts for services
- The public was still wary about COVID-19 and participating in programs and large events

Despite these hurdles, the result was a summer filled with enriching classes, camps, and community events.

Future Programs

As the Department looks ahead to the summer of 2022, staff evaluated areas for improvement:

- Supervisors are currently preparing a Fiscal Year 2023 program and event wish list, which will outline potential programs, activities, and events for the Summer 2022 Come Play Outside program. This list will prove useful as staff begins working with San Diego Parks Foundation and other partner organizations to seek input on these programs as well as financial assistance in the form of grants and donations. The wish list will provide donors an

overview of projected activities and events and the associated costs to execute them.

- With this planning tool, Department supervisors will have advance notice of programs and events that will be financed.
- Supervisors will have ample time to plan, promote and secure services, supplies, and equipment to provide programs and events.
- The Department will continue to fill vacancies, as many job classifications have been vacant for some time during the pandemic. This will allow more programs to be scheduled.
- Working with other City departments such as Purchasing and Contracting, staff plans to establish contractor recruitment fairs in communities of concern to obtain culturally relevant programs in each respective community.
- The Department plans to continue to work with partners to establish a marketing plan to bring more awareness to the Come Play Outside programs and events, as well as the Department's recently revised Fee Waiver Program.

Conclusion

With the support of Mayor Gloria, the City Council, the County of San Diego, the San Diego Parks Foundation, and Price Philanthropies, the Department managed to execute a years' worth of planning an incredible summer line-up of programs and events into two months, all the while navigating the pandemic and continuously changing protocols. The Department embraced the Come Play Outside program with excitement and enthusiasm as they called upon their communities to get outside, get back into their parks, and come together with their peers and neighbors. This opportunity provided equitable and enriching programs across communities of concern at little to no cost to participants. The Department looks forward to the possibilities that lie ahead as we continue to work closely with our partners to develop exciting programs for the upcoming year.