

**Parks
Make
Life
Better!**

STATE-WIDE HEALTHY PLAY INITIATIVE



Developed in Partnership By



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Collaborative Partnership:



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The purpose of this report is to raise awareness and provide education and considerations about promoting health and wellness through outdoor play and fitness environments. It is not to be considered as an all-inclusive resource. While our intent is to provide general resources to encourage communities to apply research-based design and programming best practices to their outdoor play destinations, the authors, advisors, partners, program directors, and contributors disclaim any liability based on information contained in this publication. Site owners are responsible to inspect, maintain, repair, and manage site-specific elements, and to ensure that trainers and program directors employed on-site are certified in the fields in which they provide programming. PlayCore and its divisions provide these comments as a public service in the interest of building healthier communities through play, while advising of restricted context in which it is given.

MESSAGE FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



“And at the end of the day, your feet should be dirty, your hair messy, and your eyes sparkling.” — Shanti

There is no greater profession than one that touches the lives of so many, in so many ways. Parks and Recreation professionals – and the partners who help make our work happen – recognize the importance of play, in all stages of life.

...Play that grows healthy children with creative problem solving skills

...Play that instills sportsmanship and team work in youth

...Play that engages teens in constructive behaviors

...Play that combats chronic disease and fights obesity

...Play that brings a community together

Local parks are the gateway to playful, healthy, active lifestyles. And thanks to our friends at PlayCore and GameTime, we now have 7 new 'gateways to health' across California. Not only will these new play spaces promote active communities within their own borders, but the data collected from these National Demonstration Sites will assist other communities in the development of their own spaces. Best practices in the development of play spaces, collection of community outcomes, and

researched-based design will provide park and recreation agencies nationwide the evidence they need to advocate for the importance of play.

Initiatives like this take time, passion, and resources. My sincere gratitude goes out to our partners at PlayCore and GameTime. Their unending support for the park and recreation field and research on the importance of play will continue to strengthen our message that we are truly an essential community service.

To the 7 agencies who are now National Demonstration Sites, thank you for taking on this important work! You truly are shining examples of how partnerships can benefit not just your local community, but the larger park and recreation community as well.

Now, go get your feet dirty!

Namaste,

Stephanie Stephens, CAE
Executive Director
California Park and Recreation Society

About



California Park & Recreation Society (CPRS)

Founded in 1946, CPRS is a nonprofit, professional, and public interest organization with close to 4,000 members who create community by:

- providing recreational experiences to individuals, families, and communities
- fostering human development
- promoting health and wellness
- increasing cultural unity
- facilitation community problem solving
- protecting natural resources
- strengthening safety and security
- strengthening community image and sense of play
- supporting economic development

The California Park & Recreation Society's mission is to advance the park and recreation profession through education, networking, resources, and advocacy.

CPRS is the source of resources, tools, advocacy, and events that strengthen California's public parks and recreation industry and its professionals. CPRS unites members and creates networks across disciplines and agency boundaries. The vision statement, "We Create Community Through People, Parks, and Programs" describes the preferred future of parks and recreation and is the cornerstone of strategic planning efforts.



Parks Make Life Better!® Campaign

The goal of the Parks Make Life Better!® campaign is to raise awareness of the benefits of parks and recreation throughout California and to raise the status of parks and recreation as an essential community service. When all 525 park and recreation agencies in California unite under one banner and communicate clearly and concisely the key messages of the Parks Make Life Better!® campaign, it will reach the following brand objectives:

- Build loyalty for parks and recreation services
- Heighten the profession's bargaining power and independence
- Stimulate growth
- Attract talented people to the profession
- Involve the public
- Gain greater resources and support

Advocating for the Research-Based Benefits of Play

Play and recreation bring communities together in a variety of meaningful ways. Play projects uniquely build social capital through community engagement, create positive outcomes as a result from the physical enhancement or renovation of the built environment, and provide meaningful experiences and programs that will impact the physical and social activities of children, families, and community members for years to come.

The research is clear- play has a multitude of critical benefits to build healthier communities. Play and recreation is absolutely necessary for a healthy society. Play is dynamic, active- an integral part of children's growth and development, allowing them to discover their full potential. The foundation of learning, play is essential for healthy physical, social, and intellectual development- providing joy and emotional fulfillment. Children learn about the world around them through self-created experiences where they are free to express their creativity, individuality, and imagine new worlds.

Opportunities to engage in memorable play experiences throughout one's lifespan fosters happy, healthy, and productive communities that value and appreciate the benefits of play, recreation, and

most of all- fun. It is through play that people of all ages and abilities foster friendships, connect with the wonders of nature, and engage in active play and physical activity-creating a healthy life balance and passionate members of society. Play is a valid solution to promoting lifelong healthy lifestyles and the development of the mind, body, and spirit.¹

PlayCore's Center for Professional Development assists communities in advancing the quality of play and recreation through the implementation of research, continuing education, research-based programs, community support, and advocacy. Working closely with the world's foremost play scholars, PlayCore funds independent research studies to provide a variety of resources to help communities advocate and fund play initiatives.

Now more than ever, park and recreation leaders are seeking innovative ways and evidence-based solutions that will positively impact community outcomes. Park and recreation professionals are essential partners in combating some of the most complicated challenges our country faces, including obesity, sedentary lifestyles, and social inequities. Active, intergenerational play in outdoor environments is the gateway to a healthier lifestyle.²

State-Wide Collaborative Partnership to Promote Health



We are so excited to help local communities put research to action.”

— Stephanie Stephens, Executive Director, CPRS

Deeply committed to promoting the value of play, PlayCore and GameTime are proud to partner with the California Park and Recreation Society and align with likeminded advocates, professionals, and park and recreation leaders across the state of California. Through this partnership, our goal is to promote health and wellness across communities through research-based best practices and develop National Demonstration Sites of outdoor environments that greatly enrich and enhance the quality of life where citizens of California live, work, and play. We are honored to highlight the phenomenal work

and leadership of the seven park and recreation agencies that were awarded the Healthy Play Action Grants and share their success stories. These agencies and their projects will serve as model demonstrations and inspire others to use play as a catalyst to build healthier and happier communities. Their efforts demonstrate how investing in play results in positive outcomes, grows social capital, and builds stronger communities through the power of play.

Goals of the State-Wide Healthy Play Initiative

CPRS partnered with PlayCore and GameTime to promote play and health across California in an effort to report community outcomes. The program launched at the 2015 CPRS Conference with the goal of sharing initial outcomes at the 2016 CPRS Conference in Long Beach. Data collection and outcomes will continue to be collected over the course of the year, to be shared in 2017. The following goals of the initiative were outlined by CPRS, PlayCore, and GameTime:

- Expand upon the successful Parks Make Life Better!® campaign with a replicable, research-based training and action grant initiative that promotes health and wellness across California.
- Execute state-wide professional development across communities in an effort to create opportunities for professionals across disciplines to partner, network, and/or collaborate on health and wellness initiatives, as well as provide continuing education credits, research-based educational resources, and advocacy/consulting services to help parks and recreation professionals expand their knowledge and turn research into action.
- Provide action grants to high quality community projects that align to research-based design best practices and standards-based programs in an effort to collect meaningful outcomes and serve as a national model.
- Publish white papers and other advocacy communications and tools to further champion play and recreation initiatives and demonstrate effective strategies for all steps of the process, including community engagement, planning, fundraising, research-based design, building, and collecting community outcomes.



State-Wide Training and Professional Development

In an effort to further CPRS's Health and Wellness initiative, and promote the CPRS Brand Promise, PlayCore's Center for Professional Development provided eight state-wide training events to bring research-based practices to communities across the state. The events were held within the five CPRS regions, and locations were selected in order to bring the broadest opportunities to professionals seeking to attend. Working with the region representatives, these events were held free of charge, open to park and recreation professionals, community health and wellness partners, local non-profits, or other stakeholders that had an interest in health and wellness. Over the course of several months, CEU approved and research-based education sessions on various topics surrounding play and recreation were held, collectively providing over 450 hours

of continuing education to nearly 150 park and recreation professionals across the five regions. The purpose of the training events was to provide quality professional development opportunities surrounding the latest research and best practices to promote community health and wellness through outdoor play and recreation spaces. Education sessions focused on topics such as inclusive play, engaging children with nature, and promoting physical activity for multigenerational users. Attendees also had the opportunity to learn more about the action grant and funding opportunities, while taking away valuable resources and information to help them successfully complete and submit their grant application.



“This experience gave me ideas about how to bridge the gap between recreation being just fun, to focusing on health, fitness, and overall wellness.”

— Training Participant in San Marcos



THANK YOU

Our sincerest appreciation to the following park and recreation agencies and district leaders for hosting the professional development events across the state:

- City of Bakersfield, Recreation and Parks
- City of Fresno, Parks, After School, Recreation, and Community Services
- City of San Diego, Park and Recreation
- City of San Gabriel, Community Services
- City of San Jose, Parks, Recreation, and Neighborhood Services
- City of San Marcos, Community Services
- City of Santa Rosa, Recreation and Parks
- City of West Sacramento, Parks and Recreation

Thank you to the CPRS Region Representatives for their assistance and support with coordinating the Healthy Play State-Wide Training Professional Development Symposiums across the five regions:

- 1 Henry Perezalonso
*Recreation Services Manager
Town of Danville*
- 2 Traci Farris
*Interim Recreation Manager
Ceres Recreation Department*
- 3 Darin Budak
*Assistant Director
City of Bakersfield*
- 4 Tom Boecking
*Community Services Manager
City of San Gabriel*
- 5 Aliah Brozowski
*District Manager
County of San Diego*



The session provided lots of examples and research evidence. The presenter was knowledgeable and articulate.”

— Training Participant in San Gabriel

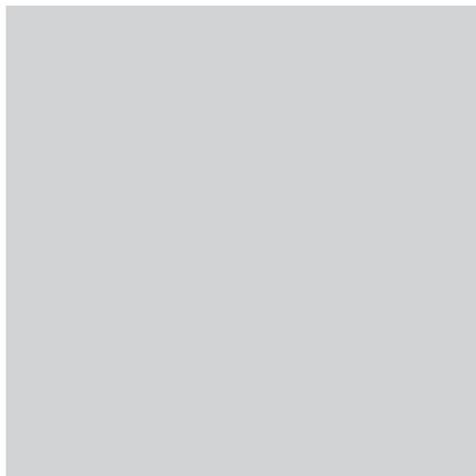
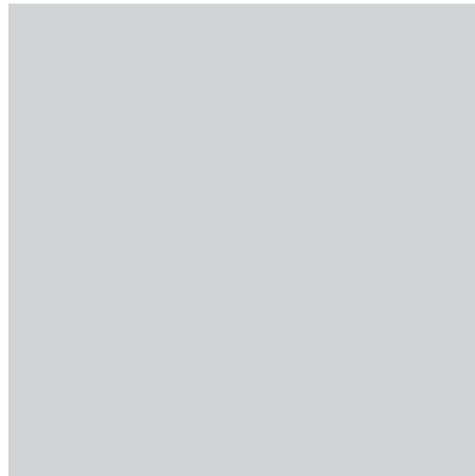
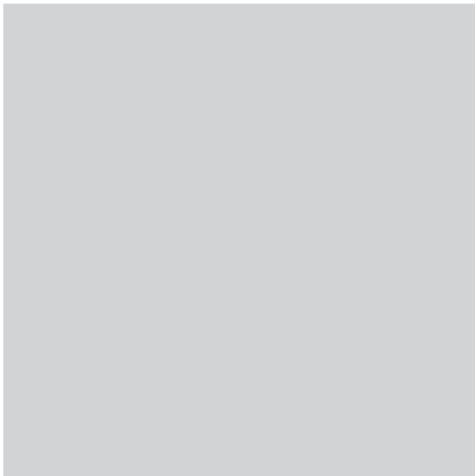
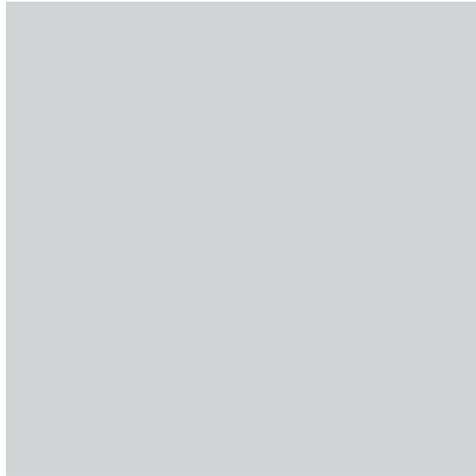


Turning Research into Action Grant Funding

Through the generous support of GameTime, matching Action Grant funding was provided to selected winners to assist them with completing park projects designed to promote and serve as National Demonstration Sites. This funding opportunity was ideal for projects that were partially funded, wished to apply research-based practices, and/or hope to expand fully funded projects.

Candidates from across the state submitted applications and essays outlining their community's health and wellness initiatives and specifically share how they planned to utilize the new play destination to help reach their goals. Communities seeking to make a state-wide impact and share outcomes on community health through play and fitness were encouraged to apply. Applications included

information about their community's demographic and need, community input, collaborative/unique partnerships, application of research-based design principles, and plans to use the space to enhance programming and promote health. Essays included details on the outcomes and data that they would gather in support of the goal for publication of the white papers, in order to collectively communicate the impact that the project had across the state. The grant applications were collaboratively reviewed by a variety of representatives with CPRS, PlayCore, and GameTime. While there were a variety of high quality applications, these seven communities were notified on October 15th that they would be awarded the Action Grant funding, to complete their proposed projects by spring of 2016.



2016 Healthy Play Action Grant Award Recipients

- City of Bell Gardens Recreation and Community Services
- City of El Segundo Recreation and Parks
- City of Lakewood Recreation and Community Services
- City of Murrieta Community Services
- City of Santa Rosa Recreation and Parks
- County of San Diego Department of Parks and Recreation
- City of West Covina Community Services

Community Leadership Case Example



Located in the southeast region of Los Angeles County, the City of Bell Gardens is reportedly one of the most densely populated urban communities in the nation. Approximately 27.6% of citizens are living below poverty level, and Bell Gardens has one of the highest child obesity rates in Los Angeles County. Residents face disparities in education, gender equity, and access to parks- creating a great need for the promotion of healthier lifestyles through physical activity and education reinforcement.

The City of Bell Gardens Recreation and Community Services Department is deeply committed to providing recreational and educational opportunities to make a life-long positive impact in the lives of residents by following a clearly defined health and wellness trajectory and progressive efforts targeted to help fight the obesity crisis. In 2010, Bell Gardens became a Healthy Eating Active Living (HEAL) City by passing a resolution to promote employee wellness, healthy food access, and improved built environments such as walkable sidewalks, park restoration, and access to open green space.



Photos Courtesy of City of Bell Gardens

By securing a \$40,000 Renewing Environments for Nutrition, Exercise and Wellness (RENEW) grant from Los Angeles County, policy reform increased healthy food access by regulating the contents of food sold in vending machines at recreational facilities. Staff successfully collaborated with various health organizations such as the local Family Health Care Centers of Greater Los Angeles and the California Center for Public Health Advocacy to educate over 450 staff and residents on a variety of health-related topics.

Nearly 8 years ago, the City's budget was reduced and services at Marlow Park were suspended. In an effort to bring back positive attention to this forgotten park, the Department held a community police awareness event at Marlow Park in an effort to build trust and relations with law enforcement. During the event, the community voiced their need for a new playground. The National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA) recommends a minimum of 5.25 acres of park space per 1,000 inhabitants, and a .5 mile radius area surrounding Marlow Park revealed

City of Bell Gardens



Recreation and Community Services Department Marlow Park - Bell Gardens, CA

only .22 acres of park land was available per 1,000 inhabitants- indicating a critical park land deficit with only 5% of the recommended park land space being met.

The City of Bell Gardens Recreation and Community Services Department was awarded a CPRS Healthy Play Action Grant to help fund a new playground at Marlow Park aligned to six key elements of play to promote physical activity and fitness. The Public Works Department provided the funding that was matched through the grant and gained council approval. On February 8, 2016, Marlow Park celebrated the opening of their new community park and recognized individuals for their leadership and dedication to improving the lives of the citizens of Bell Gardens.

"The City of Bell Gardens is committed to fighting childhood obesity. And what better way to fight childhood obesity than by building fun, physically challenging play structures that children flock to? We see this park as an investment, not only to the City of Bell Garden's infrastructure, but in our youth,

and we are thrilled to participate in this worthwhile endeavor," shared Chris Dasté, Director of Recreation and Community Services for the City of Bell Gardens.

The new Play On! National Demonstration site will utilize the Play On! program and the evidence-based playground activities to maximize their new community asset. The program will be used by CODELA, a state-funded preschool that operates on-site at Marlow Park, and Bell Gardens Neighborhood Youth Center will adopt the curriculum and implement new playground fitness programs for children and their families. Park and recreation staff will monitor the impact of services and collect meaningful data through surveys and participant testimonials to share collected with community stakeholders. They hope to demonstrate how the revitalized park and programming initiatives makes a positive difference. The City of Bell Gardens Recreation and Community Services Department will continue to advocate for play as a vital component in their efforts to strengthen, educate, and build a healthier community.

Photo Courtesy of City of Bell Gardens



HEAL City Resolution Passed (July 2010)

Significant changes are needed to support individual efforts to make healthier choices in:

- Built Environment
- Employee Wellness
- Health

RENEW LOS ANGELES COUNTY 2010 - 2012

- \$40,000 Grant
- Policy Reform - Healthy Food Access (Vending Machine Policy Passed July 27th 2011)
- Nutrition Education for Staff & Residents!

Community Leadership Case Example



Photo Courtesy of City of El Segundo



The City of El Segundo is a family-oriented city located in Los Angeles County with residential areas that are predominantly high-density housing that lack green space. Consequently, local parks are a highly utilized amenity. The Recreation and Parks Department strives to create safe and healthy environments to meet the diverse leisure needs of the entire community through their mission that parks are "El Segundo's Backyard." They provide a wide array of programs including but not limited to cultural arts, aquatics, camps, farmers market, community garden, transportation, senior and adult activities, sports, fitness-focused classes, and unique special events.

As a Healthy Play Action Grant recipient, the City of El Segundo was awarded funding to complete a renovation project at the centrally-located Hilltop Park, situated at the highest point within the City. The park is connected to schools and apartments within short walking distance, features a wading pool,

picnic area, and shaded green space. The previous playground was in need of replacement to meet the growing, diverse population and comply with the current safety and accessibility standards. The new research-based design will enhance the quality of life of the children and adults of the El Segundo community by providing services and programs that offer positive opportunities for building productive lives.

Hilltop Park is designated a Play On! National Demonstration Site for intentionally incorporating six key elements of play to encourage moderate to vigorous levels of physical activity and promote physical fitness, health, strength, endurance, flexibility, and balance through play. The program helps combat the obesity epidemic by providing fitness and fun on the playground. The Play On! program will help El Segundo maximize the potential of their new community investment.

City of El Segundo



Recreation and Parks Hilltop Park - El Segundo, CA

The El Segundo Recreation and Parks Department is committed to educating the community on the benefits associated with play. They will use the Community Cable Division of their Department to utilize with and Division of their Department and their expertise in media distribution to strategically coordinate publicity, community outreach, educational videos, and messages through cable television to help increase awareness about the importance of play to create healthy bodies, advocate for play and recreation, and promote healthy lifestyles.

"The City of El Segundo is excited to be part of a larger movement across the state and nation that demonstrates parks and recreation services as a major component to public health," stated Meredith

Petit, Director of Recreation and Parks. "Hilltop Park is positioned to be an ideal location to collect data and meaningful outcomes to further demonstrate the benefits of purposefully designing a playground that implements evidence-based best practices."

Parks and recreation services are essential to the prosperity of all communities regardless of location, demographics, or economic status. By using the play research and advocacy tools provided by PlayCore and the available resources and networks provided by organizations such as California Parks and Recreation Society, recreation and parks staff are able to provide data and facts supporting the need for sustainable resources to provide quality parks and recreation facilities.

Photos Courtesy of City of El Segundo



Community Leadership Case Example



Since Lakewood's founding in the early 1950s, the city government and residents have taken great pride in creating beautiful parks and wholesome recreational opportunities for local residents. That commitment remains alive and well today, with an array of programs and facilities designed to bring citizens together to create a sense of community in a fast-paced and busy world. Lakewood strives to holistically improve its residents' lives by creating opportunities to create healthy bodies and minds.

Concerts, block parties, carnivals, and "family fun" activities are popular events held throughout the year, while program offerings are tailored to meet the needs of people of all ages. Lakewood's Active Plus program for baby boomers boasts activities such as Pickleball, walking and poker clubs, and technical training opportunities in an effort to support an active 50+ generation. Lakewood's Adaptive Recreation programs include community field trips to help individuals with disabilities develop social and independent living skills, arts and crafts classes,

Photos courtesy of City of Lakewood



themed dances, talent shows, and a video gaming tournament. In 1992, a Lakewood Special Olympics team was introduced as a sports component of the program, and in 2015, Lakewood served as the host city for the Special Olympics International World Games. Lakewood offers free after school recreation programs and sports leagues with Activity Zones operating year round- providing children a safe place to play, do homework, and take part in Lakewood's Youth Sports Program. Through both public and corporate/private partnerships, Lakewood has provided many new opportunities and services for residents.

The workshops presented by PlayCore and CPRS in August of 2015 in San Gabriel, provided Lakewood staff the opportunity to augment understanding of current trends to promote intergenerational physical activity in parks. Environments marrying fun and fitness span generations and maximize opportunities for social interaction. Incorporating the latest best practices in play further encourages and motivates

City of Lakewood



Recreation and Community Services Rynerson Park - Lakewood, CA

children to get outdoors and engage in healthy activity by incorporating the six key elements of play—brachiating, climbing, sliding, swinging, balancing, and spinning—into all new play areas.

According to the 2010 census, of Lakewood's 80,048 residents, 32% are under the age of 20, 47% are age 21 to 54, and 21% are over 55. Almost 55% of Lakewood homes have three or more people, demonstrating a high number of families residing in the city. Recreation and Community Services applied for the CPRS Healthy Play Action Grant in an effort to create a community park with a blended atmosphere and a culture of fitness embedded throughout. Lakewood's vision became a reality when they were awarded action grant funds.

Rynerson Park is located in the heart of the city, and offers a new intergenerational destination that serves as a National Demonstration Site for Adult Outdoor Fitness and as a Play On! National Demonstration Site for Promoting Physical Activity. The two playground areas target children ages two to twelve, while an adjacent fitness area target teens through seniors. Rynerson Park maintains a walking path that hosts a daily walking club, and a three mile round trip adjacent bike path provides connectivity along the West San Gabriel Riverbed and the City of Lakewood Nature Trail.

The Adult Outdoor Fitness Park serves as a strategic element of an overall playground design to provide parents, guardians, and supervisors with an active alternative to sitting while observing children at play. This unique joint-use typology provides an option for greater family participation and helps extend the duration of time spent outdoors engaged in healthy exercise. It provides a social outlet for community members to engage in a healthy activity together. In order to reap maximum health benefits, the Adult Outdoor Fitness Park provides a well-rounded fitness routine that addresses aerobic, muscle, and core

fitness, as well as opportunities to promote balance and flexibility.

The new Play On! playground replaced an outdated structure that was installed in 1988. The play environment was designed to encourage children to actively move through play. The play equipment was intentionally selected to promote moderate to vigorous levels of physical activity, provide a diverse array of opportunities to engage in developmentally appropriate play, and offers a wide variety of challenge levels.

While California remains a state mandating physical education in schools, many districts are cutting physical education teachers at the elementary level and the state curriculum is not specified for elementary and middle schools. Where California schools are finding deficiencies, Lakewood readily accepts the challenge to provide play and fitness programs to help youth and their families achieve health and wellness goals and meet national standards. Lakewood plans to offer fitness classes with trainers and enhance boot camps/circuit trainings with the new outdoor fitness equipment. Rynerson Park resides between the city's two teen centers, so seasonal teen classes will be offered to help jumpstart a love for fitness and outdoor activity.

The City of Lakewood Recreation and Community Services Department has identified potential partnerships to collect data and determine community benefits, and they look forward to sharing their knowledge and outcomes through the CPRS Healthy Play Initiative.

Community Leadership Case Example



The City of Murrieta provides recreational, educational, and cultural opportunities designed to enrich the quality of life for its residents and encourage long-term community stability and growth. Incorporated in 1991, Murrieta has experienced a 400% increase in population, and is quickly attracting first-rate healthcare facilities, research firms, and upscale businesses. Murrieta is known for providing safe, clean, beautiful, and accessible facilities, parks, and activities, and it is recognized by the FBI as one of the top ten safest cities in the nation.

The Community Services Department boasts 50 parks, 22 miles of multipurpose trails, and hundreds of programs that range in diversity and afford generous leisure and recreation opportunities to residents. Murrieta offers an Equestrian Park, Skate Park, Youth Center, Senior Center, pool, and the Community Services Department encourages citizens to join their Get Fit, Murrieta movement to support healthy bodies. The City hosts over 20 special events

such as its Birthday Bash, Holiday Magic Program, Summer Concerts and Movies in the Park, and one of the largest Veterans Day parades in the area. An adult alternative recreation program provides activities such as dances, field trips, and social events tailored to the needs of adults with special needs. As part of the Parks and Recreation Master Plan, The City of Murrieta identified a need for additional programming and play opportunities for children with special needs, and earnestly hoped to create a new outdoor inclusive play environment with the CPRS Healthy Play Action Grant funding.

Embracing the power that play has on the physical, psychological, and emotional well-being of all children, the City of Murrieta has established partnerships with Our Nicholas Foundation and the Comprehensive Autism Center to help bring more inclusive play to its parks and programs. Jennifer Smith, Autism Community Director for the Comprehensive Autism Center stated, "I understand and appreciate the critical importance of providing

City of Murrieta

Community Services Vintage Reserve Park - Murrieta, CA



an inclusive playground for children of all abilities to help promote play, physical activity, and awareness.

This helps break down barriers and promote friendships-and provides a place of opportunity." The retrofit of Vintage Reserve Park will replace the 18-year-old equipment with a fully inclusive playground that includes many nature themed elements that promote dramatic play and learning. Construction is underway, and the reopening and celebration is scheduled for 2016. As a National Demonstration Site for Inclusive Play implementing the 7 Principles of Inclusive Playground Design™, it will be the first park in the City of Murrieta to have a universally designed playground that exceeds minimum accessibility. Additionally, careful thought was given to ensure that the park addresses fitness and movement for all children by incorporating six key elements of play to promote physical activity.

As a Play On! National Demonstration Site, the City demonstrates that inclusive playgrounds can be challenging and fun for everyone.

Centrally located and next to a public elementary school, the renovation of Vintage Reserve Park is the first of many steps toward achieving and improving upon the City's goal to create a more accessible and healthy community for all. Through various outlets and resources, especially via its Economic Development Department, the City has the means to collect relevant data and outcomes surrounding the impact the new inclusive play destination brings to the community and use it to update their master plan. Vintage Reserve Park serves as a leadership model of how demonstration to how the City of Murrieta continues to focus their attention on improving the quality of life of every citizen.

Photos Courtesy of City of Murrieta



Community Leadership Case Example



The County of San Diego's Park and Recreation Department's mission is to enhance the quality of life in San Diego County by providing opportunities for high-level parks and recreation experiences and preserving regionally significant natural and cultural resources. Their vision is to create a parks and recreation system that is the pride of San Diego County and serve as a national model. Today, their award-winning park system includes 36 local parks, 19 regional parks, 8 camping parks, 11 historic sites, and more than 350 miles of trails.

Key strategic initiatives are organized under four primary umbrellas- healthy families, safe communities, sustainable environments, and operational excellence. These efforts closely align with the goals of the County of San Diego's Live Well San Diego program to improve the health, safety, and well-being of all County residents by cultivating opportunities for individuals and communities to grow, connect, and enjoy the highest quality of life. The County of San Diego, Department of Parks and

Recreation was awarded Housing Related Parks funds from the State of California, Department of Housing and Community Development Grant. These funds help create new park and recreation facilities and provide improvements to existing park and recreation facilities in park-deficient or underserved communities. The CPRS Healthy Play Action Grant provided the opportunity to greatly enhance the Housing Related Parks funds to assist with the Spring Valley Community Park Improvements Project. Spring Valley Community Park includes five acres of park amenities including picnic facilities, playgrounds, fitness trail, community center, and a daycare facility. Densely populated, Spring Valley is serves a diverse population of approximately 5,427 citizens. Total park acreage in this community is 1.13 acres per 1,000 residents, well below the County standard of 3.0 acres of parkland per 1,000 residents. Due to the lack of park space, Spring Valley Community Park is heavily used, however the playground areas were deteriorated and in need of replacement.

City of San Diego



Department of Parks and Recreation Spring Valley Park - Spring Valley, CA

Beyond promoting physical activity through six key elements of active play, the Department of Parks and Recreation wanted to increase usability for people of all ages and abilities to the greatest extent possible. By applying PlayCore's 7 Principles of Inclusive Playgrounds™, developed in partnership with Utah State University, Center for Persons with Disabilities, the design of the new play environment creates a universally designed play destination that exceeds minimum accessibility guidelines. It features nature-inspired climbers, adaptive swing seats, fully accessible routes of travel throughout the structure, and multisensory features. The Spring Valley Community Planning Group and Spring Valley Community Revitalization Committee provided community input and favorably received the proposed project. The new play environment will thoughtfully address the needs of the whole child for physical, social, sensory, communicative, and cognitive development, and it will be the first inclusive playground in the community.

"We're doing our part to build healthy, safe, and thriving communities while helping to foster a sense of pride in the neighborhoods that surround our parks and preserves. To do that, we have to build and maintain parks that are fun for all recreational users," explained Brian Albright, Department of Parks and Recreation, Director.

Currently awaiting construction, Spring Valley Park will serve as both a Play On! National Demonstration Site for promoting healthy physical activity and a National Demonstration Site for Inclusive Play-making a fundamental statement about how their community values play for people of ages and abilities. The new playground will enhance the current programs provided at the community center, summer day camp, and events such as their successful "Movies in the Park" series, in which data will be collected to support the goals of the Department and the state-wide initiative.

Photos Courtesy of City of San Diego



Community Leadership Case Example



The City of Santa Rosa is 40 square miles, home to over 170,000 residents, and located within Sonoma County, California, in the heart of Wine Country. The vision of the City of Santa Rosa Recreation and Parks Department is to "create community through people, parks, and programs." By providing rich recreational experiences, the department's mission is to foster human development, increase cultural unity, protect environmental resources, facilitate community problem solving, strengthen safety and security, and promote health and wellness in an effort to build a strong community image, foster a sense of place, and support economic development.

The Department proudly manages four community centers, two pools, golf course, 65 parks, innovative youth services, historic destinations, and hundreds of recreation programs and instruction that truly carry out the mission of the Parks Make Life Better!® campaign. The Department provides recreation programming to approximately 200,000 participants of all ages and abilities and 1,600 scheduled classes

Photos Courtesy of City of Santa Rosa



a year including opportunities that focus on health and fitness, arts and culture, aquatics, sports, special community events and celebrations, camps, and offerings tailored for active adults over age 50 and special populations.

Many people are not aware that within Sonoma County and Santa Rosa there are large disparities in health, education, and socio-economic status. The City of Santa Rosa Recreation and Parks Department continuously strives to provide equity and access to parks and programs for all citizens, so resources and attention are often focused on underserved communities and areas of need. With a share of the funding from the Transactions and Use Tax (Measure "O"), the department provides gang prevention and intervention services to youth in Santa Rosa through after-school and summer playground programs, in-school violence prevention and conflict resolution education, and staff support to the Neighborhood Revitalization Program and the Mayor's Gang Prevention Task Force Policy and Operational Teams. Neighborhood Services provides innovative youth

City of Santa Rosa

Recreation and Parks

A Place to Play - Santa Rosa, CA

development programming that serves at-risk, low-income, and homeless youth and families throughout Santa Rosa.

When applying for the CPRS Healthy Play Action Grant, the Recreation and Parks Department had the ideal location in mind. The surrounding neighborhood near, A Place to Play Park, is ranked 83rd out of 99 census tracts in Sonoma County on the American Human Development Index. Providing a new playground, specifically designed to promote physical activity, would truly make a difference in the utilization and health of citizens. The master planning process included significant public meetings to determine what amenities residents wanted. The approved plan identifies six soccer fields, a softball field, two baseball fields, two multi-use fields (soccer and baseball), a dog park, bocce ball and shuffle board courts, horseshoe pits, three sand volleyball courts, a remote control car track, skate park, group picnic area, two playgrounds, natural wildlife area, and trails connecting to the Santa Rosa Creek trail system.

To date, phase One is complete and fundraising efforts are underway to complete phase Two. In early March, the ribbon cutting for the new playground at A Place To Play Park included playground activities for children and MOVE!, the Department's ongoing, free, outdoor fitness event series that encourages outdoor exercise, and other activities for youth and adults. Activities were led by a certified fitness instructor and highlighted the benefits of active play. A Place to Play is already alive with hundreds of sports participants on the fields, and the new playground sits just adjacent to the soccer fields, providing opportunities for children to engage in active play in close proximity to the action occurring nearby. As a Play On! National Demonstration Site, the new playground offers a wide variety of balancing, brachiating (overhead climbing), climbing, swinging, sliding, and spinning elements and addresses a developmental profession of

healthy skills. The playground features vibrant "shadow play" elements, providing a kaleidoscope of visual interest by capturing the sun rays and dispersing the seven colors of the rainbow. The result is a dynamic play environment that changes throughout the day. Landscape architects and an arborist will infuse natural elements into the design and the playground's surroundings, linking the playground site to a nearby natural area featuring wetlands, wildlife, and places to explore nature. Just north of the playground is the Santa Rosa Creek Trail which is used for walking, running, biking, bird watching, and accessing the park.

The Recreation and Parks Department plans to program more activities at A Place to Play, with the new playground as a catalyst. They are deeply committed to data collection and outcome reporting to demonstrate the value play has on building a healthier community.

This will be a playground that keeps kids engaged in fun, active, and challenging play that contributes to motor development and fitness. It is a truly special site that is anchored with research-based playground design best practices and will foster a more enjoyable and active experience for park visitors."

— Nanette Smejkal, Director
City of Santa Rosa Recreation and Parks



Community Leadership Case Example



Through planning, information, and direct stewardship, the Community Services Department aims at improving the safety and quality of life in West Covina. Known as one of the most progressive cities in the San Gabriel Valley, the City of West Covina strives to be a healthy city and believes active, inclusive play is key to achieving this goal. The Community Services Department provides for the protection and enhancement of parks, recreation facilities, and community services and offers a variety of non-competitive youth and adult sport classes and leagues, Equestrian Center, camps, after school recreation, preschool program, Aquatic Center, transportation services, community outreach services, special events, and a Senior Citizen Center. The City of West Covina was one of the first cities in California selected to participate in the Special Olympics World Games "Host Town" program, reinforcing their commitment to inclusion and the need for more inclusive play opportunities.

Nikole Bresciani, Community Services Director, listed inclusive programs and facilities, community

connectivity, and affordable access to recreation that promotes physical activity as top priorities for the Department. Key objectives strive to improve the safety and quality of life in West Covina by promoting positive social behavior, self-discovery, and skill development, by supporting a wide variety of services for citizens all ages, backgrounds, and needs. The Department feels that in order for a community to be truly healthy, it must fully include the population it serves.

Cameron Park was chosen for the CPRS Healthy Play Action Grant project location because it is a lively, multi-use hub to the community, hosting a variety of programs at the Cameron Community Center including sports leagues, summer lunch program for low income at-risk students, classes, picnic areas, special needs groups, and special events. The park is adjacent to a local elementary school and high school. Currently, the two school districts in the City of West Covina, serve over 2,500 students with various disabilities with only two inclusive playgrounds available in the surrounding San Gabriel Valley region.

City of West Covina

Community Services Cameron Park - West Covina, CA



With an excellent reputation, the City of West Covina has multiple strong partnerships with various state and local organizations to ensure individuals with special needs are fully included in city wide activities including San Gabriel/Pomona Valley Regional Center, Mt. San Antonio College, Casa Colina, Special Olympics, and American Youth Soccer Organization. Through collaborations and new ventures, the City excels in expanding opportunities that richly impact citizens. Appointed by the Community & Senior Services Commission, community members and recreation professionals represent the views of the community and deemed an inclusive playground as a priority and need for West Covina. Additionally, the City's Community Services Group, which is made up of multiple non-profit organizations, service groups, and local businesses, fully supports the inclusive play project. This group provides community service, fundraising, and a united partnership to assist programs, services, and projects that are underfunded. The intent of the construction of the new play environment is to ensure that all individuals have inclusive, equitable access to play and park

space to enhance the social, educational, cultural, and civic needs of the community. With completion around the corner, Cameron Park's new inclusive playground will feature a ship and island theme, a face-to-face swing for children and their caregivers that offers a unique intergenerational activity, a rocking "raft" that allows individuals using mobility devices to enjoy sensory rich movement alongside their peers and/or caregivers, balcony play panels with comfortable access and reach to a variety of activities, and dramatic play and musical components to promote creativity and imagination. By applying the 7 Principles of Inclusive Playground Design™ and including developmentally appropriate activities through six key elements of play to promote physical activity outlined in the Play On! program, Cameron Park demonstrates research-based design principles and creates a meaningful and memorable play environment for people of all ages and abilities. It will serve as a national model for promoting inclusive play and physical activity, and it will be an ideal location for collecting data to further validate the importance of investing in inclusive play.

Photo Courtesy of City of West Covina



"The City of West Covina strives to be a healthy City and for full inclusion and believes a key to achieving this is through healthy, active, inclusive play."

— Nikole Bresciani, Community Services Director
City of West Covina

Outlook and Next Steps

Deploying Research-Based Practices to Document Leadership and Collect Outcomes

The Healthy Play Action Grant award recipients highlighted in this report offer a few stellar examples of unique ways that park and recreation agencies across California are addressing the local needs and goals of their community stakeholders. These National Demonstration Sites are shining examples of how leaders have thoughtfully implemented best practices during the planning, implementation, and continuous improvement stages of their initiatives and goals surrounding health and wellness. These agencies and visionary leaders are equally focused on advocacy through the documentation of their initiatives, collection of meaningful outcomes, and sharing the value that play and recreation brings to children, families, and community members.

Over the course of the next year, the CPRS Healthy Play Action Grant award recipients will continue to collect data at the completed play and recreation sites and gather additional community outcomes. In addition to this initial report, a companion

progress white paper will be published and made available through PlayCore and CPRS at the 2017 CPRS Conference, District Conferences, and other applicable venues in an effort to highlight success stories, discuss challenges and barriers, and offer advocacy and inspiration across the state for making play a priority.

If your community would like to initiate a similar movement to promote best practices to support healthy lifestyles and become a model demonstration, share your vision at info@playcore.com. National Demonstration Sites receive complimentary signage to use onsite to commend community leadership, and your efforts will also be recognized through certificates of recognition, the use of the National Demonstration Site Seal for communication and marketing, and inclusion on the National Registry Map with National Demonstration Site designation, so that other communities can learn from, and witness your best practice model.

Join us in our mission to creatively promote and support play and recreation initiatives that align with evidence-based research across California. Together we make a difference— nothing unites and builds healthy communities more than the power of play!

National Demonstration Sites align to design best practices in one or more of the following programs - Physical Activity (PlayOn!), Inclusion, Outdoor Adult Fitness, Nature, and Playful Pathways. To learn more about PlayCore's research-based play programs or to become a national model, visit the following webpages:



www.playcore.com/playon



www.playcore.com/inclusiveplay



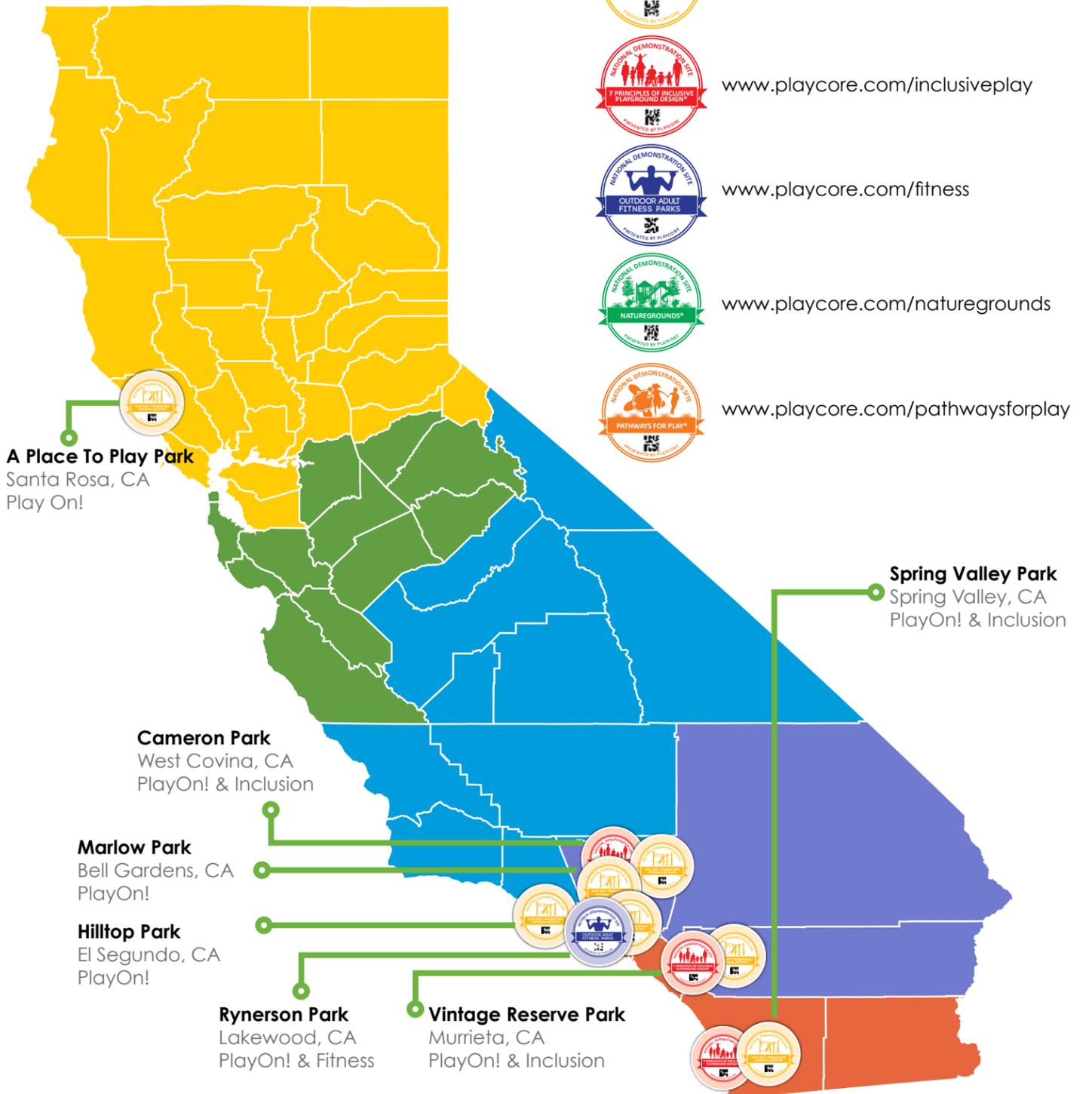
www.playcore.com/fitness



www.playcore.com/naturegrounds



www.playcore.com/pathwaysforplay



References and Resources

References

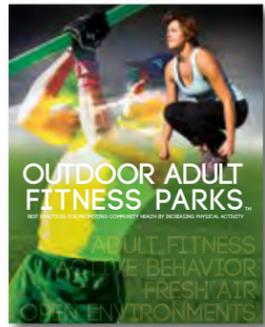
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2. Norton, G. and Suk, M. (2004). America's public lands and waters: The gateway to better health? *American Journal of Law & Med*, 30, 235-41.

Resources



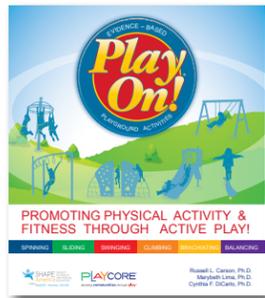
Me2: 7 Principles of Inclusive Playground Design and *2Play Together* provide educational resources for communities that wish to move playgrounds beyond minimum accessibility and recognize everyone's right to fully participate in equitable play.

To request a full copy of both inclusive play programs: www.playcore.com/Inclusiveplay



Outdoor Adult Fitness Parks is a comprehensive guidebook that provides best practices for promoting community health and increasing physical activity.

To request a full copy of the Outdoor Adult Fitness Parks guidebook: www.playcore.com/fitness



Play On!: Promoting Physical Activity & Fitness Through Active Play promotes physical fitness and fun through the use of well-designed outdoor play environments and evidence-based playground activities.

To learn more or purchase a the Play On! program: www.playcore.com/playon



To download this report and see additional updates, please visit www.playcore.com/CPRS



“Your leadership and investment in high quality play and recreation experiences is essential to healthier, happier communities. Thank you for making a difference in the lives of the children and communities you serve.”

— Your Friends at PlayCore



For more information on building communities
through play and recreation:

877.762.7563 | www.playcore.com