
PRESS RELEASE

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Houston Parks and Recreation Department Receives Grant to Support Local Out-of-School Time Programs

Grant Will Have Impact on Children's Nutrition, Health Knowledge, and Physical Activity

The Houston Parks and Recreation Department (HPARD), in partnership with the National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA), has received a \$30,000 grant to support its out-of-school time healthy food access and nutritional literacy programs. The gift is part of a \$2.3 million grant NRPA received from the Walmart Foundation to support out-of-school time programs in 50 park and recreation agencies. The purpose of the grant is to:

- Increase the number of healthy meals children in low-income communities receive through the Summer Food Service Program (SFSP) during out-of-school times.
- Change behavior by teaching children the importance of healthy eating through evidence-based, age-appropriate nutrition literacy, including the OrganWise Guys program.
- Implement nutrition and physical activity standards that increase access to healthier foods and opportunities for physical activity.

The grant will help increase access to healthy foods and improve opportunities for physical activity. Grantees will also receive additional support for meals provided through USDA afterschool and summer feeding programs, as well as nutritional literacy materials to help ensure life-long healthy habits for the youth of Houston.

This grant supports NRPA's new campaign, Commit to Health, which encourages the implementation and evaluation of Healthy Eating, Physical Activity (HEPA) standards in park and recreation sites across the country. NRPA's goal is to have at least 2,000 participating sites in five years.

According to the USDA's 2010 Hunger report, 16.2 million American children live in food-insecure households. The same report finds that 19.5 million low-income children receive free or reduced meals during the school year, but fewer than 3 million of these children participate in the Summer Food Service Program. During summer months, these children may not have access to quality food to help them grow, making HPARD's work during out-of-school times that much more critical.

"Across the country, community parks and recreation programs are vital health resources for all people," said Barbara Tulipane, President and CEO of NRPA. "This generous grant from the Walmart Foundation will allow park and recreation agencies to expand the critical work they do to improve quality of life and foster life-long healthy habits among the youth in their communities."

"We are happy to partner with the NRPA and the Walmart Foundation in the Commit to Health campaign," said Joe Turner, Director, Houston Parks and Recreation Department. "Helping children grow into active, healthy adults with good nutrition habits is important to us."

HPARD will implement the NRPA Commit to Health and HEPA standards at 12 community center sites during the summer and 12 the following fall. The standards call for these children to have physical activity outside whenever allowed by the weather, enjoy meals that meet program nutrition guidelines, and take part in the OrganWise Guys education regimen. HPARD will evaluate the program with the possibility of expanding it to all department community centers.

The Houston Parks and Recreation Department (H.P.A.R.D.) stewards and manages over 38,752 acres of parkland and greenspace for the City of Houston and develops and implements recreational programming for citizens of all abilities. For more information on the Houston Parks and Recreation Department, call (832) 395-7022 or visit www.houstonparks.org.