



CITY OF SANTA BARBARA
PARKS AND RECREATION COMMISSION REPORT

AGENDA DATE: October 23, 2019

TO: Parks and Recreation Commission

FROM: Recreation Division, Parks and Recreation Department

SUBJECT: 2019 Summer Camp and Marketing Report

RECOMMENDATION:

That the Commission receive a presentation on the 2019 summer camp highlights and marketing initiatives.

DISCUSSION:

Summer programming is a key focus for the Parks and Recreation Department (Department), providing young people ages 3 through 17 opportunities to participate in enriching cultural, educational, sporting, and environmental activities. In preparation for summer camp 2019, staff completed an extensive analysis of the previous year's summer programming, reviewing the total number of youth served, the age range of activities, program evaluations, and customer feedback. This information, coupled with new programming trends that are successful in other communities, assisted the Recreation Division with developing and implementing a wide range of exciting and engaging programs.

Due to a competitive market for summer camps, staff placed an emphasis on expanding popular programs, improving customer service through registration services, and increasing the timing and frequency for targeted marketing campaigns and initiatives. New programs for 2019 included Camp Millionaire, Kidz Love Soccer Camp, and Adventure and Ocean Explorers Camp, while the expansion of the popular HEARTS Horse Camp, Skate Camp, and LEGO Camp contributed to the overall success. In 2019, 4,274 registrations were processed for summer programming, a 76% camp occupancy, compared to 4,143 registrations the prior year, a 3% increase in participation.

Effective marketing, executed from a solid plan yet allowing staff to adapt quickly when necessary, is a key component of the success of the Department's summer programming. In 2019, summer camp marketing efforts focused on a combination of online and print informational resources, print advertising, and frequent email and social media promotion spanning from March through August.

Registration began on March 1, 2019, three weeks earlier than in 2018, when the opening date was delayed due to launching the PerfectMind online registration platform. A printed summer camp guide, mailed to local neighborhood residents and available in all Department facilities, and a series of social media posts and marketing emails reached customers before and just after March 1, building excitement about the opening day of registration. March 2019 was the Department's single most successful summer camp registration month on record, with a registration increase of 374 participants (36%) over the prior year.

In addition to print, email, and social promotions, the Department offered an easily-searchable—and easily-shareable on social media—way for parents to find camps that best suit their children's interests. The summer camp website, sbparksandrec.org, provides a user-friendly portal into the PerfectMind online registration system.

Creating a robust reporting process, by extracting data from PerfectMind to populate Excel dashboard charts with performance benchmarks for every camp, was a major contributor to this year's summer camp marketing success. Staff generated reports daily when registration began, and weekly through the end of August, providing data-driven insights for weekly marketing efforts: camps falling behind in revenue were identified early and given extra marketing support, while less time, effort, and advertising spend was allocated to camps that didn't need it. In identifying popular camps with plenty of room to grow, staff focused on maximizing return on marketing investment.

Marketing plan items included:

- Printed and mailed materials to local residents;
- Customer-focused messaging directed at parents as decision-makers and their concerns and parenting goals as important ingredients in summer camp choices for their families;
- Update of mobile-responsive website for convenient viewing;
- Social media and online advertising campaigns focusing on new camp offerings and ways for parents to find appropriate information;
- Mobile-friendly marketing emails to summer camp parents; and
- Regular monitoring of up-to-the-minute summer camp enrollment and revenue, used to inform decisions about which camps to promote.

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