

2015 Impact Statements

Adventure Central

Miami Valley Extension Education and Research Area

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PREPARING YOUTH FOR SUCCESS

- Adventure Central is a trusted, community-based, positive youth development partnership serving at-risk children and their parents in the West Dayton community since 2000. This nationally recognized program has been at the forefront of positive youth development—providing children and families opportunities to change their lives through building positive well-being, higher academic performance and less involvement in risky behaviors. Using nature, our high-quality and diverse staff nurtures participants in life-changing activities that strengthen values, build lasting life skills and empower youth to explore life’s possibilities.
- Adventure Central engaged over 225 urban Dayton youth ages 5 to 18 and over 90 parents/guardians in programming totaling nearly 69,000 contact hours in 2015. This positive youth development initiative focused on science, nature and healthy lifestyles was made possible through funding and support from Five Rivers MetroParks, OSU Extension, Ohio 4-H, Ohio 4-H Foundation, University of Dayton, Mathile Family Foundation, Buckeye Health Plan, and other grants and contracts. After-school, day camp, overnight camp, teen and activity night programs focused specifically on ongoing contact with youth.
- One significant teen-led effort was the camp counselor program. Twenty-two teens demonstrated outstanding leadership in planning and leading the Adventure Central overnight, residential camp. Through participation in multiple training and planning sessions, the teens planned a highly effective camp. Teens demonstrated skills such as teamwork, communication, self-direction and critical thinking—vital skills for today’s workforce—all while being great role models for the youth in the program.

ADVANCING EMPLOYMENT AND INCOME OPPORTUNITIES

- Youth participating in Adventure Central programs are developing 21st century workforce preparation

and interpersonal skills that better prepare them to be productive members of society and that positively impact the community in which they live. While all Adventure Central programs reinforce these valuable skills, the Job Experience and Training (JET) program, a nationally recognized 4-H Program of Distinction, is the cornerstone of this effort. Nineteen teens participated in training and job experiences through the JET program and held volunteer or paid positions in a wide variety of park-related summer jobs at Five Rivers MetroParks facilities. Through this program, teens reported an increase in the development of 21st century skills like organization, problem-solving, collaboration and overall leadership.

- Nearly 200 volunteers and supports contributed over 15,000 hours to the program at Adventure Central. The impact of this support is most evident in their service as positive role models and caring adults to all youth in the program. Support came from Adventure Central parents, local high school and college students, University of Dayton Fitz Center for Leadership and Community, Good Neighbor House, OSU Extension Master Gardener Volunteers, and caring community members. Partnerships with the University of Dayton Semester of Service Program and Sisters of Notre Dame Mission Volunteer Program provided the continuity of service in the form of five full-time AmeriCorps positions that enriched the lives of youth in the program.

STRENGTHENING FAMILIES AND COMMUNITIES

- Family involvement has been associated with high-quality programs, children’s academic achievement and healthy development. Adventure Central offered family programs in an effort to close the gap between home, school and after school, and to increase sustainable family engagement. Eight programs were held throughout the year with a total attendance of 635 participants. Parents indicated their primary motivation for participating in these programs was to support and be a good role model for their youth—



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meeting a key goal of the program and filling a vital role in the lives of those youth. As evidence of strong parental engagement, 100 percent of parents agreed that their child is safe at Adventure Central and that Adventure Central has supported their children's academic efforts. Ninety percent of parents agreed that their child has improved academically because of participation at Adventure Central.

- A common concern for youth service providers is effectively engaging adequate parental support. Providers recognize that involving families in their children's learning is critical to academic achievement and overall healthy development, but communicating and connecting with parents can be challenging. Since introducing a parent progress report tool in 2011, Adventure Central has observed increases in parent volunteerism, greater participation at events, improved communication and increases in overall support of the program. The tool has been shared with numerous partners, program providers and a national conference audience with the intent of replicating a similar effort. Parent volunteer hours have increased 1,000 hours annually since implementation of the tool.

ENHANCING AGRICULTURE AND THE ENVIRONMENT

- Adventure Central has always placed a high priority on getting youth outdoors and active. Through unstructured time outdoors daily and through additional structured group learning adventures in the 60-acre Wesleyan MetroPark, participants and their families have new experiences in nature, which make them socially and emotionally happier, physically healthier and more open to new possibilities. Many of the urban families participating in Adventure Central have limited opportunities to connect with the natural world. Youth at Adventure Central spend at least one hour a day outdoors and consistently report that doing so is one of their favorite things about the program.
- Older youth took on a yearlong reforestation project to grow 500 trees and shrubs as part of a larger initiative with Five Rivers MetroParks. Throughout the process teens learned how to identify, collect, prepare, germinate and grow a variety of native species. A special partnership with the University of Dayton River Steward 2015 Graduating Cohort added a peer mentoring and cultural learning component to the program with the older youth and college students working and learning together throughout the year. Participants reported gains in understanding how trees grow, an appreciation for nature and natural processes, and awareness of local natural areas and community assets.