

Camping at the Presidio (CAP): Exploring the impacts of an urban camping experience for underserved youth



The Objective: *Determine the effects of CAP on participants*

The aim of this program is to introduce low-income youth who are non-traditional park users to camping. This one-of-a-kind opportunity allows these kids to be exposed to a whole new outdoor experience close to home thereby staying within their relative “comfort zone.” This overnight, urban camping program was launched in San Francisco for the first year in 2007 and is designed for community organizations and schools serving the areas most disadvantaged youth. This study primarily explored youth participation regarding access to camping, outdoor living skills gained, most meaningful experience, connection to the national park, and occurrences with nature, in general.

The Project: *Collect data from participants, community leaders, and staff. Analyze data, both qualitatively and quantitatively, to measure the overall impacts of the program on participants.*

Multiple methods were used to collect data. The data collection process was divided into three parts: Participants, community leaders, and CAP program staff. Participants received evaluations to complete on-site, post-program. For more in depth information, three focus groups were conducted with groups that participated in CAP. Also, leaders were asked to complete two instruments: 1) On-site, post-training evaluation, and 2) an online survey after completing the actual CAP trip with their group. In addition, interviews were conducted with partner staff from the Presidio Trust, Crissy Field Center, and the Bay Area Wilderness Training. Closed-ended questions from written evaluations (participants/adult leaders) were analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). A content analysis was completed on all qualitative data gathered through development of analytic patterns, conceptual schemes, and emerging themes.

The Results: *Overall, CAP has been successful in providing an opportunity for youth to learn about camping close to home, explore the outdoors through recreational and educational opportunities, and discover new connections to nature.*

Over 500 people enjoyed Rob Hill yet the 2007 pilot season served 17 community groups, trained 50 leaders and served nearly 300 participants in an overnight experience (75% were youth ages 7-12). In general, the program rated highly among youth and leaders. Results show the guided programs were the highlights of the trip for many people. Responses indicate youths’ connection to the outdoors was enhanced, to some extent through environmental education and experiential learning. From both focus groups and evaluation responses, the top five favorite activities mentioned by participants were: 1) campfire time, 2) Day hike and hiking in general, 3) night hike, 4) guided activities, 5) tent building and “hanging out” in the tent. In most cases, both participants and leaders expressed a desire to return for another CAP program in future and articulated an increased interest and curiosity in nature after this experience. CAP has provided an intrinsic and socially valuable opportunity for Bay Area youth, families, and organizations.



Campfire time was one of the most popular activities

This summary is based on a General Technical Report submitted to the Crissy Field Center (a partnership of the Golden Gate National Parks Conservancy and the National Park Service) and The Presidio Trust. For more information on the Crissy Field Center Youth Programs, visit: <http://www.crissyfield.org>. Requests for a copy of the final report or questions about this summary should be addressed to Dr. Nina S. Roberts, San Francisco State University at nroberts@sfsu.edu