



“MIGHTY KIDS” INNER-CITY SKATING PROGRAMS

Background

Since 1998, staff from the Ramsey County Parks and Recreation Department, Saint Paul Parks and Recreation Division, and Saint Paul Community Education have met with representatives from the six (6) youth hockey associations (now three parent hockey associations), and members of the Minnesota Hockey Diversity Committee to develop a framework for a more comprehensive program which addresses the barriers that have deterred inner-city youth from participating in skating programs. In March of 1999, the Ramsey County Parks and Recreation Department received a \$20,000 Mighty Kids Grant from the Minnesota Amateur Sports Commission to support the development of a program that helps break down the barriers that have traditionally deterred inner-city youth and, particularly, people of color from participating in the sport of skate. This new approach more fully addresses issues of program exposure and opportunities for experiencing ice sports throughout the community. **Program components include the following:**

Step #1 - Exposure

The Kyle Peterson's Mites Program – In 1993, the Ramsey County Parks and Recreation Department teamed up with Kyle Peterson, from the Mariucci Inner-City Skating Program and Saint Paul Community Education and Saint Paul Parks and Recreation Division to provide an after-school learn-to-skate program for first grade inner-city youth at Gustafson-Phalen, Ken Yackel-West Side and Biff Adams arenas. The program is provided free to children and is supervised by Saint Paul Community Education and Saint Paul Parks and Recreation staff. After school, participants are bused directly from their schools to the arenas. Ice time, skates, helmets, kneepads, and warm clothing are provided as part of the program. The program includes five one-hour lessons, directed by a paid on-ice coordinator with assistance from high school hockey boys and girl players from the Saint Paul area. This program provides skating instruction to 240 inner-city first graders each year. We continue to provide this free program as one means to introduce inner-city youth to the sport of skate.

Step #2 - Access

Mighty Kids Skills Development Program – The Mighty Kids Skills Development Program is held on Saturday mornings at four Ramsey County inner-city arenas. In 2003-2004, these programs will be at Charles M. Schulz-Highland, Biff Adams, Ken Yackel-West Side and Harding arenas, throughout the winter season (12 weeks). Paid on-ice instructors conduct the program, with volunteer assistance from neighborhood youth hockey associations and student athletes from area universities and high school hockey teams. The primary objective of this program is hockey/skating skill development, mentoring, building relationships within the community and developing self-esteem. The program is provided at a reduced fee of \$20.00 for youth who qualify for the free or reduced lunch program and \$65.00 for other participants. All equipment is provided and maintained at each site. The program accommodates 60 youth per site with a total of 240 K-3rd grade inner-city youth.

Step #3 - Integration

Mighty Kids Hockey Scholarship Program - Qualifying youth (children on the free or reduced lunch program) are provided with scholarship vouchers that entitles them to participate in neighborhood youth hockey association programs at a discounted rate of 80% off the normal

program registration fee. The association is reimbursed from the Mighty Kids Scholarship Fund. For the past four years, the Mighty Kids Inner-City Skating Steering Committee has distributed over \$10,000 per year in scholarships to inner-city youth.

Program Funding

The Ramsey County Parks and Recreation Department has taken the lead in coordination and fundraising for the Mighty Kids skating and scholarship programs. Ramsey County serves as the fiscal agent and provides a significant amount of in-kind support (\$41,444) in staff leadership and ice time for the Mighty Kids programs. Saint Paul Community Education and Saint Paul Parks and Recreation departments also provide program support including transportation costs, staff supervision and marketing for both programs (\$11,137).

Due to changing economic conditions and associated challenges facing government agencies, Ramsey County and Saint Paul Community Education and the Saint Paul Parks and Recreation Division can no longer support the Mighty Kids program at this level. Accordingly, the Mighty Kids Inner-City Skating Steering Committee is seeking additional private donations and grants to cover the direct costs of the program. The Ramsey County Parks and Recreation Department intends to continue to coordinate the program.

The direct cost of each program is as follows:

Kyle Peterson's Mighty Mites Program	\$23,000
Mighty Kids Learn-to-Skate	\$29,000
Mighty Kids Scholarship Program	<u>\$10,000</u>
Total Expense	\$62,000

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