

Overview

Youth Center Profile

- Westpark Community Center
- Ventura, California
- Serves nearly 700 children

Funding Sources

- City general fund
- Ventura Police Activities League
- California Police Activities League

Program Needs

- Track attendance on-site at center
- Track attendance at outside activities
- Provide documentation for funding
- Match programming to participant needs

KidTrax® Adoption

- January 2003

Key Benefits Gained

- Automated attendance tracking
- Smarter program development
- Point-and-click reporting
- Faster preparation of grant applications
- Easier grant approval
- Ready-to-print mailing labels
- Online member surveys
- On-site attendee list for emergencies

Quote

"KidTrax gives us the ability to answer any question in seconds, whether it's for our internal use or a grant application. We now receive grants with no requests for additional information because we now can provide complete documentation on everything from attendance to demographics."

— Anita Diaz, *Community Services Youth/Sports Coordinator*

Case Study: Ventura Youth Center Sails through Grant Requests with Help of KidTrax®

Until 2003, the Westpark Community Center in Ventura, California, had no adequate way to track participant attendance or facility usage. The youth center had no sign-in sheets, no member database, and no way to gather reliable data for internal management purposes or funding documentation. Today, Westpark uses the KidTrax® ID card member management system to automate these processes, capturing attendance information electronically and producing comprehensive usage and demographic reports with a few clicks. The change has equipped center managers with concrete data for program analysis, saved hours of time in grant preparation, and ensured easy approval of funding requests.

Police-Community Partnership

Westpark is the nerve center of the Ventura Police Activities League (PAL), a joint project of the Ventura Police Department and the municipal Community Services Department. Located in a predominantly Hispanic low-income area on the city's west side, the center has an enrollment of 700 youths ages 6 to 17 with average weekday attendance of 80 to 120. Programs range from sports, fitness and recreation to homework assistance, ceramics and computer education, providing a safe haven for at-risk youths.

Drop In, Scan Card

The catalyst for Westpark's adoption of KidTrax was the hiring of Anita Diaz as the center's new community services youth/sports coordinator in late 2002. When Diaz arrived, she discovered that Westpark had the necessary waiver and emergency forms on file but no attendance records at all. By January 2003, she had purchased and installed KidTrax software and hardware for less than \$4,000 with funding provided by the California Police Activities League. Now all center participants have KidTrax ID cards that are scanned with the system's barcode scanner every time they walk through the front door. That attendance information is then transferred from an attached PC to the KidTrax database on a nightly basis for later reporting and analysis. KidTrax is also used to log participation in an on-site meal program sponsored by a local food bank, making it easy to show the sponsor how many meals are served and to whom.

Off-Site, Scan Roster

In addition to using KidTrax to document attendance at the center itself, Westpark prints a roster of KidTrax barcode IDs for children scheduled to attend off-site sports activities and field trips, then uses a handheld scanner to check in each child as he or she arrives. This provides a complete record of participation in activities ranging from soccer and basketball leagues to guitar classes, car maintenance clinics, and bus outings to special events such as UCLA football games. That data is again used for reporting as well as to provide accountability to the Ventura Police Activities League for the field trips they sponsor. "PAL has fundraisers where they raise money for young people on Ventura's west side," Diaz notes. "KidTrax enables us to match our attendance lists to the neighborhoods where the children come from to demonstrate that the money is going where it's supposed to go."

About KidTrax®

KidTrax is a comprehensive web-based youth and membership tracking system that combines ID cards, scanning technology, a middleware connection to school district databases, reporting, and a variety of other tools to assist in tracking, managing and analyzing participation in youth programs. The system automatically logs time and attendance information by scanning special ID cards when members enter and leave a facility, eliminating paper sign-in sheets and manual compilation. Reports identify key usage patterns to aid in program development and documentation for funding requests.

About nFocus Software™

nFocus Software is the leading provider of tracking, testing and training products for the public sector with over 3,500 customers worldwide. The company's KidTrax product is the #1 youth tracking and membership management system. Customers include Boys & Girls Clubs, Police Activities Leagues, The Salvation Army, U.S. Army, GEAR UP and Weed & Seed programs.

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Statistical Patterns with a Click

Beyond the ability to track attendance electronically, the value of KidTrax for Westpark lies in the availability of 150 standard reports that provide insight into facility usage patterns (based on attendance data) as well as user demographics (based on information collected when children enroll). Diaz generates five KidTrax reports on a regular basis: a daily traffic report; monthly breakdowns on attendance by member, program and day-by-day usage; and a birthday list by month. She can also produce reports showing attendance by gender, age or school; answer any question ranging from how many kids played soccer last year to the average income of member families in seconds; and so on. This yields major benefits for both programming and grant preparation.

A Tool To Improve Programming

In the programming arena, one lesson that Diaz learned from KidTrax demographic reports is the large proportion of member parents who do not speak English. In response, center managers began producing bilingual waiver forms and Spanish versions of center flyers, inviting parents to attend Westpark tutoring programs to see how they can help their children at home, and planning more activities with parental involvement. Similarly, report data that revealed the number of children living in families with multiple fathers triggered new strategies for communicating with the center's user community.

Faster Data Collection for Grants

For Westpark, KidTrax has also saved hours of grant writing time because of the ready availability of documentation as well as the point-and-click reporting capabilities. "Before KidTrax, the center just didn't have the data to support our grant applications. Most of what my predecessors put together was guesswork, and everything had to be assembled manually," Diaz says. "The KidTrax system has simplified the whole process and also made it much easier to get funding approvals. Our grants are now renewed with no requests for further data because we can document what we do and who we serve in precise detail."

Goodbye, Hip-Hop; Hello, Karaoke

Another key KidTrax benefit for Westpark is the system's online survey function. Every month, the center prepares a survey to gauge member interest in different activities as well as to probe school- and home-related issues that might affect programming. The survey is administered in the computer lab through KidTrax, and the system compiles the results electronically. In one case, the combination of the survey results and KidTrax attendance reports revealed a seasonal population shift toward younger children because many older members were tied up with school football. "We immediately replaced a hip-hop dancing program aimed at high schoolers with a karaoke offering more suited to sixth and seventh graders," Diaz recalls. "The data resulted in smarter programming."

Fringe Benefits

The KidTrax system has equipped Westpark with a variety of other tools to aid day-to-day operations. Center managers use the software to print mailing labels nearly every month ("If we're going into soccer season, for example, we can ask the system to print labels for all the kids who participated in soccer for the past three years"), vastly improving their ability to communicate with members. They also know exactly who is in the center at any given time, providing vital information in the event of a neighborhood emergency. "KidTrax gives us complete control over all information related to our facility, and the best thing is that nothing has to be done by hand," Diaz says. "That gives us more time to do what we're here for: provide services to the kids."