

After-School Programs

Occupying Time Wisely and Safely

The clock strikes three o'clock, a bell alerts students school is over and it is time to go home. Many children leave campus to go home to an empty house, unsupervised until mom and/or dad arrives – sometimes hours later.

After-school hours are a critical time to keep kids out of harms way, according to law enforcement officials, as the majority of juvenile crimes occur from 3 to 6 p.m. Several after-school programs in the Sacramento area are designed to keep kids off the streets, engaged in a fun and, most of all, safe environment.

"Kids get bored and get into trouble," says Michelle Lazark, Public Information Officer for the City of Sacramento Police

by
Kimberly Horg

Department. "After-school programs are good all the way around. They not only keep kids out of trouble but also teach them different things other than playing video games and watching television. It is also healthy for kids to be part of a group or team."

The After-School Education and Safety Program Act, Proposition 49 (passed in 2004), was designed to guarantee and increase funding for after-school programs at all public elementary and middle

schools throughout the state. However, Sacramento City Council Member Kevin McCarthy says it will not be put in place in California until the budget is under control; so for now the city decided to set aside almost \$1 million to fund youth programs. The city's programs plan is scheduled to go into effect this fall.

"There are not enough productive activities do to between 3 to 6 p.m.," McCarthy says. "Stuff happens if there are not enough things to do, so the city decided to step up and expand after-school programs; it was a priority."

Although Proposition 49 is directed at younger age groups, the city also wants to fund programs for teenagers, says McCarthy.

"It costs \$70,000 for one child to be placed in a youth facility, whereas the same amount can be used to fund 100 kids in after-school programs," he says. "We want to spend our money wisely, so we are currently try-

Continued on page 10



Cut the Cord

Continued from page 8

ing to find existing facilities like churches or schools to use."

The 4th "R"

But until more programs are created, Sacramento parents can take advantage of several already in existence, some of which are now celebrating anniversaries with a new generation of students.

This year is the 20th anniversary for 4th "R" Recreation. The original building opened in Sacramento, but over the years more centers opened its doors in Natomas, Rio Linda and in North Sacramento.

"The children who came here when we started, now have children of their own and are bringing their kids here; that itself speaks volumes," says Sabrina Stewart, program supervisor at 4th "R" Recreation.

This program's emphasis is the importance of recreation; main subjects for kids are reading, writing, arithmetic and the 4th "R" – recreation. The activities are all designed to meet a child's social, emotional, intellectual and physical development.

It is state-licensed and the city's parks and recreation department operates the program. It is fee-based, but there are subsidized slots for low-income families. Each site accommodates 100, K-6 students.

The students are not grouped by age but instead they intermingle with other age groups. According to Stewart, as a result, students often develop a brother or sister relationship with older and younger children.

The program provides two snacks a day: one in the morning and one in the afternoon. There is homework time, arts, crafts, sports, science and field trips. It is open Monday through Friday from 7 a.m. to 6 p.m. and is closed on holidays.

A Little Bit of Everything

Another established program is the Sacramento's Students Today Achieving Results for Tomorrow (START). START is an academic enrichment program for students of low-income families. Helping students to succeed socially and academically, the program employs parents

Resources

For more information:

4th 'R' Recreation:

Founded in 1985
www.cityofsacramento.org/parksand-recreation/
or call 916-808-6021

Sacramento START:

Founded in 1995
www.sacto.org/recreation/sac-start.htm
or call 916-277-6115

Child Development, Inc. /

Child Development Centers:
Founded in 1969

www.cdcdc.org
or call 916-557-4401

Brighton Schools:

Founded in 1992
www.brightonschools.com
or call 916-791-8050.

Beanstalk:

Founded in 1973
www.beanstalk.ws
or call 916-344-6259

California Department of Education:

www.cde.ca.gov
or call After-School Program office at 916-319-0215

and community members to be after-school instructors, a couple hours a day, four days a week. Currently, it is operating in five school districts in the Sacramento area.

Funded through the California Department of Education (CDE), Beanstalk in Sacramento offers different morning, afternoon and full-day preschool and school-age programs for ages up to 12 years old.

"We try to enrich what schools are teaching, not duplicate it."

Sandra Walden

Beanstalk executive director

The preschool programs are designed for school readiness, and K-6 activities are for recreation and academic enrichment. Both programs include indoor and outdoor activities.

"We try to enrich what schools are teaching, not duplicate it," says Sandra Walden, executive director of Beanstalk. "Parents really like our programs, after all this time, they continue to bring their kids here."

There are 1,000 children enrolled in the programs including the family child-care network (which provides reimbursements for child-care fees from licensed family child care

providers).

Another program funded by the CDE and by parent fees is Child Development, Inc./ Child Development Centers. It has 160 early care and education centers throughout California for children up to age 12. It has variety of infant, preschool and school-age programs. In the school-age program, instructors work with parents and elementary school faculty to help children with homework, projects and academics.

Brighton Schools, an after-school program in Folsom and Granite Bay, services elementary schools and even provides transportation for students. There are morning activities and different afternoon clubs for recreation as well as enrichment-based programs including art, sports, science, drama, cooking and computers.

"We offer a little bit of everything," says Christa Green, director of training and special programs at Brighton Schools.

There are 140 kids enrolled who are grouped by age and are instructed by 12 qualified and credentialed teachers. Tuition costs depend on the program. Brighton Schools offer morning and/or afternoon classes, but the afternoon class is the core program, starting at 3 p.m. The school also has a holiday camp, with specialized field trips and entertainers, as well as a summer camp.

Merryhill Schools, Kinder Care, Kids Junction, Knowledge Learning, The Caring Tree and Angles in Action are some other local programs to help keep children productive, happy and safe.