Park Hop: An inter-agency collaboration to promote park visitation and physical activity in Greenville, SC

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BACKGROUND

- Parks are important venues for physical activity (PA) [1,2]
- Parks are underutilized by youth [3,4]
- The number and types of park features are related to increased park awareness and park-based PA [5,6]
- The Task Force on Community Preventive Services strongly recommended the creation or enhancement of access to places for PA combined with informational outreach activities for PA promotion [7]

PURPOSE

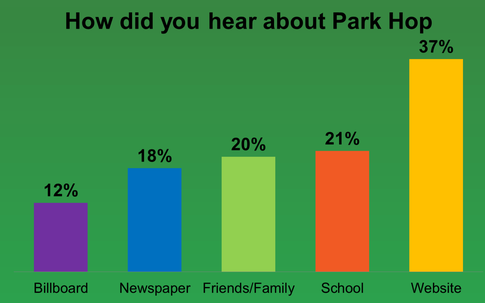
This abstract describes the preliminary evaluation of Park Hop, an innovative collaboration of diverse agencies to create an incentivized passport-style initiative to increase awareness, visitation, and active use of parks among youth in Greenville County, South Carolina.

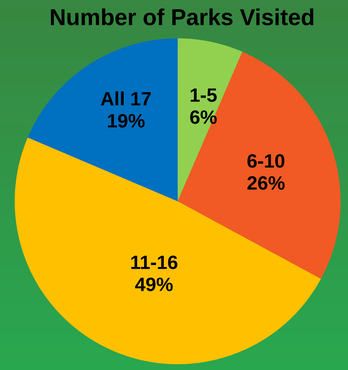
PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

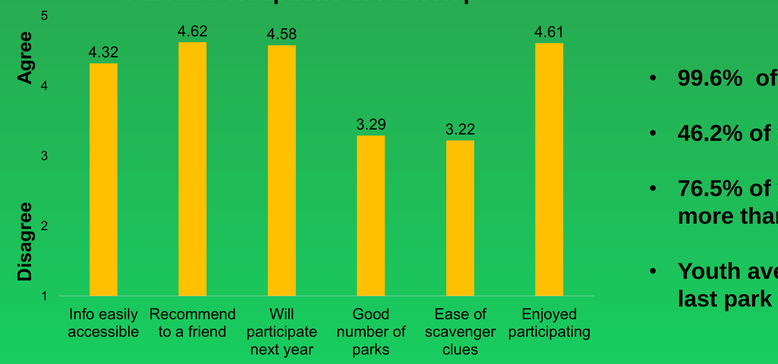
In 2013, Park Hop featured a summer-long scavenger hunt of 17 total parks from the seven area parks and recreation departments in Greenville County. Participants completed Park Passports which contained interactive clues about each park along with a short youth survey. Clues for each park were released from local media outlets and participants were recruited through a website, newspaper ads, or through flyers at recreation facilities, schools, and partner organizations. Completed passports were submitted online, through mail, or in person at the closing event. Depending on the number of parks visited, participants received fun, adventure-themed prizes such as water park passes, t-shirts, or camping gear.

RESULTS

- Over 1200 passports downloaded
- 8131 webpage views
- 231 completed Park Passports
- Age range 1-16 years (Mean=7 years)







Key Park Hop Outcomes

- **99.6% of youth visited a park for the first time**
- **46.2% of youth will visit parks more often**
- **76.5% of youth enjoyed parks somewhat to a lot more than before**
- **Youth averaged 87.1 minutes of PA during their last park visit**

CONCLUSIONS

Results indicate that Park Hop was well-received by parents and successfully influenced awareness and visitation (especially to new parks) among youth. Park Hop effectively translated park awareness research into a sustainable initiative that can influence youth park-based PA. Further, Park Hop exemplifies a successful collaboration of multiple recreation partners across Greenville County. Such partnerships may be critical during times of budgetary constraints while cross-promotion of all area parks offers a wider variety of parks to citizens.

NEXT STEPS

Next steps for Park Hop include development of a mobile app for individual park scavenger hunts and establishment of Park Hop as an annual event. In future, more focused and rigorous evaluation of Park Hop will explore effects according to the types and features of parks most frequently-visited, spatial analyses of youth and parks, and pre-post effects on youth PA.

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