

# RECREATION UNLIMITED - RAISING DOLLARS AND FORECASTING THE FUTURE

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## Overview

Recreation Unlimited - National Challenge Center for People with Disabilities is a private, non-profit organization. The year-round campus is housed on 160 acres, 35 minutes northeast of Columbus, Ohio. The American Camping Association, an accredited organization, is in its 36th year offering opportunities in camping, recreation, and sporting activities for persons who have disabilities. Recreation Unlimited's mission is to provide leisure, sport, and recreation opportunities which enhance the participant's quality of life. In general, activities are offered to encourage the development and refinement of skills in camping, recreation and sport. Participants are provided with resources so that acquired skills can be transferred into their daily life in their own community.

## Programs Offered at Recreation Unlimited

In order to discuss program and funding strategies, it is important for the reader to have knowledge about the various programs offered by the organization. The following are offered throughout the year to Recreation Unlimited sponsored program groups and individuals:

### (1) Summer Camps

A. Recreation Unlimited - This program is a six day, overnight program which occurs during five separate weeks. The target audience is Central Ohio children and adults with physical or developmental disabilities. The activities offered during this camp



include, but are not limited to, "arts" programs, sports, challenge education, climbing wall, tree climb, canoeing, hiking, nature education, outpost camping, swimming, and various special events and social opportunities. Fees are based on a sliding scale (household income) and many campers are funded through Family Resources (county funding), or Individual Options Waivers (state funding).

B. Ohio Unlimited - This program is identical in its offering to Recreation Unlimited, and serves people all over the state of Ohio and some adjacent states. Funding is based on a set fee. Some participants are eligible for state and county funding assistance.

C. Respite Day Camp - This weekly day camp program is offered to children with and without disabilities (inclusive), funding assistance through Mental Retardation-/Developmental Disabilities resources are available for some participants. Similar activities as mentioned under the Recreation Unlimited program are offered.

## (2) Sport Challenge Camps

The Sport Challenge Camp Program is a year-round program which provides a range of opportunities, introductory through advanced training, in a variety of sports and outdoor recreational activities for youth and adults with physical and developmental disabilities. Various sports such as archery, basketball, canoeing, camping, climbing, cycling, fitness, hiking, ice skating, shooting, skiing (alpine, Nordic, and water), Softball, swimming, tennis, and track and field are offered on and off site. These weekend camps highlight clinicians from Ohio and the surrounding state regions who share their expertise and knowledge with young athletes with or without disabilities. These camps have an inclusive nature in that they encourage siblings and friends to attend with the individual who has a disability. Interest in the activity is what brings them together.

Funding options for these weekends include Title Program Sponsorships from organizations such as The Invacare Corporation, partial sponsorship by a few corporations, individual sponsorship (\$130/weekend), and in many instances, participants are reimbursed for a portion, if not the entire registration fee, by the county agency funds (MR/DD) such as Family Resource Services.

## (3) Winter Sports

A spectrum of winter activities are offered throughout this beautiful season. The Adaptive Alpine Skiing Program is in its fourth year of providing downhill skiing three days a week in two mid-Ohio locations. In addition, many weekend and some week long



trips to various resort locations are provided. This program has gained a great deal of notoriety and visibility for the organization. Other activities offered include Nordic skiing on site, ice skating, ice fishing, exhibition dog sledding, and winter hiking.

#### (4) Unlimited Classroom

School-aged students with and without disabilities attend this residential outdoor education program during the school year. For a three to four day period, the natural environment is their classroom. Teachers from the schools work with the program staff from Recreation Unlimited. Team building and challenge education are major program components.

#### (5) Respite Camp Weekends

This contracted program is a weekend program (at least one weekend every month), throughout the year that offers an opportunity for non-traditional respite care in a unique, natural camp setting. Activities offered during the weekend include: (1) arts & crafts; (2) music; (3) fishing; (4) Nordic skiing; (5) nature activities; (6) sports; (7) social activities; and (8) many more seasonal events.

#### (6) Professional Workshops

This program targets the professional who provides services for people with disabilities and other professionals wishing to gain information about current issues. Previous workshops have included "Inclusive Programming" and "Adapted Aquatics". An upcoming workshop will target school teachers who wish to gain information about the environmental education curriculum from the Ohio Department of Natural Resources and how to utilize this material in an inclusive setting.

#### (7) Corporate Team Building - Challenge Education

Challenge Education is offered both on our two teams courses and off-site. The program helps groups communicate more effectively and learn each other's strengths in a non-threatening environment.

In addition to the Recreation Unlimited sponsored programs, many other groups lease the campus. Since our mission is to serve person's with disabilities, agencies which serve this population have priority over other groups. During the summer, this includes the Muscular Dystrophy Association, Champ Camp, groups from the local Children's Hospital, County Board of MR/DD agencies, and many others. Other workshops are

offered at Recreation Unlimited with various agencies such as the Ohio Department of Natural Resources, Young Life, and Teen Programs. Special Events, such as business seminars, Christmas parties, weddings, and corporate picnics, are also part of the year round leasing program.

### Funding Development

Without an extensive and professional fund development program, the organization's goals would be 'limited' rather than "unlimited". The Comprehensive Fund Development Plan that the organization's Funding Development Director, Kelly Godshall, implemented for Recreation Unlimited during the spring of 1995, includes the following categories:

1. special events
2. direct mail
3. in-kind giving
4. planning giving/endowments
5. grants/foundations, and

6. non-traditional fund-raising. As the Fund Development Director researched these areas, estimated costs to raise one dollar was an important factor (see Table 1).

Table 1 Estimated Costs to Raise a Dollar

Benefit Events	50% of gross proceeds
Corporations and foundations	\$.20 per dollar raised
Planned Giving	\$.25 per dollar raised
Direct mail acquisition	\$1.00 to \$1.25 per dollar raised
Direct mail renewal	\$.20 per dollar raised
Capital campaigns	\$.05 to \$.10 per dollar raised

Source: Greenfield, J.M. (1991) Fund-raising and managing the fund development process. New York: Wiley.

In the following section, each category of the Fund Development Analysis (Godshall, 1995), will be addressed and suggestions for similar organizations will be offered.



### (1) Special Events

Recreation Unlimited conducts some of the most successful events in central Ohio. Some of those events include: (1) Celebrity Waiters (26th year); (2) the Dave Thomas Invitational Golf Tournament; (3) an annual wine tasting event; (4) Christmas tree sales; and (5) a winter sports auction. The following issues are critical when planning special events:

- primary events conducted by the organization are dependent on outside support;
- keep expenses and staff time low while continuing to attract more sponsors;
- tracking hours spent on each fund development area will begin to estimate actual profit of event; and
- the event's history will be recorded for year-to-year comparisons, industry standards indicate a life-expectancy of three to five years, but many of the organization's events far exceed this standards.

### (2) Direct Mail

Direct mail campaigns are a direct solicitation to households or businesses for contributions. Important factors noted in the plan regarding direct mail campaigns include:

- tracking of each address will be more specific in the future and tracking of results will be much easier;
- loyal and new target audiences should be mailed a solicitation more than three to four times per year; and
- Recreation Unlimited's focus will expand statewide, regionally, and nationally.

### (3) Inkind Giving

Inkind giving includes those donations which are not financial, but have a monetary value that can be attributed to the donation. Examples of recent inkind donations are T-shirts for summer camp paid for by Cub Food, landscaping mulch, furniture, and data entry by a board member's company. These services and donations are assigned a dollar value so that this area can be tracked more effectively. Suggestions that Godshall (1995) made in this area include:

- Board, staff, committee, and vendors contacts can be utilized;
- orient staff to always look for the "ask"; and
- meet with staff biannually to list needs.



#### (4) Planned Giving

There has been no formal planned giving program until 1995; however, in years past, there have been some lucrative bequests from "friends" of Recreation Unlimited. Some of the key factors related to this category include: (1) the establishment of an endowment fund to increase the credibility of the organization; and (2) development of a strong and complete program for planned giving starting with the board of directors.

Recreation Unlimited is fortunate to have a very visible and popular central Ohioan on our staff in Jimmy Crum, previous Sports Director for a local television station. He is a 'friend' to many Ohioans.

#### (5) Grants and Foundations

Recently, grant and foundation solicitations for Recreation Unlimited have been very successful. This category is one which has the fastest, direct bottom-line results based on the willingness of staff to assist with the proposal development across all departments.

Both governmental and private organizations seem interested in the cause of the organizations. By June 1995, over \$55,000 had been received with more than \$50,000 in proposals out for approval. The following are organizations that have given grant or foundation dollars in 1995:

PPG Foundation - \$6,000

Ohio Environmental Education Fund of Ohio EPA - Research Project - \$45,000

Invacare Corporation - \$3,500

The grant or foundation application varies in length and content and is based on the information not just within the application package, but also information you can gather about the fund or organization. A personal contact with someone is helpful in developing a proposal which meets the needs of your organization and the funding organization's requirements.

#### (6) Non-Traditional Fundraising

This category includes those fundraising activities that do not fall into other categories. Examples of such activities include: (1) Old Trail Printing Program - free printing with this company; (2) Sweet Savor - percentage profit on candy from a vending machine; (3) Galyan's Promotions; and (4) Phone Card Promotions.

The six fundraising categories that have been described in this section are activities that are the sustenance to the organization; without them it would be impossible



to provide the programs that are offered for the very reasonable rates that presently exist. If it were necessary to charge a registration fee which paid for all the expenses related to the services, many clients would not be able to afford the rates. Both fund and program development are of equal importance to this and many non-profit organizations.

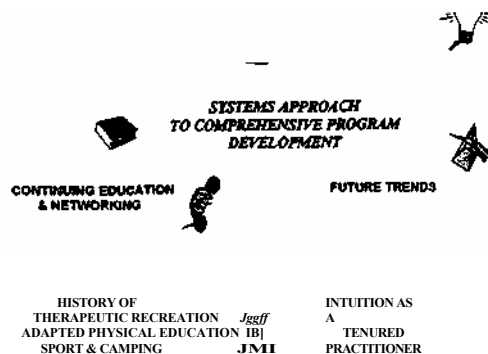
## Program Development

Comprehensive program planning requires conceptualizing the overall program for the organization. In addition, incorporating a systematic method of determining participant's needs and developing a plan based on these needs is a prudent method of program development (Peterson & Gunn, 1984). The *Systems Approach* to comprehensive program planning includes the following steps: (1) defining the purpose; (2) designing the program; (3) designing the delivery system; (4) implementing and monitoring the program; and (5) evaluation. Evaluation is ongoing, both formally and informally, throughout the model (Peterson & Gunn, 1984).

Peterson & Gunn (1984), explain that the *Systems Theory* derives success from the interrelatedness of its components. In the field of therapeutic recreation (TR), program design, implementation, and evaluation are the key components employed in the systems approach to comprehensive program planning. The programs are client-centered and are based on analysis of the client's leisure related needs.

With the knowledge base of the *Systems Approach* and other factors such as researching historical information and legislation, continuing education through course work or conferences, networking, applying intuition as a tenured practitioner, and studying future trends, comprehensive program development can become second nature. With the *Systems Approach* as the core to Program Development, utilizing these additional factors will compliment the program offerings of the organization, see Table 2, for a pictorial view of this concept.

Table 2 Program Development Model



From a historical perspective, a few of the key events and legislation, which have affected the development of leisure and sport pursuits for persons with disabilities are as follows:

#### Key Historical Events in Sports & Leisure For:

<i>Post World War I-</i>	diversional programming for veterans with disabilities was offered in the hospital setting;
<i>Post World War II- NTRS formed 1966 - Normalization Act of 1968-</i>	development of disabled sport organizations within the National Wheelchair Athletic Association (now Wheelchair Sports - USA), and recreation is viewed as part of the 'rehabilitation' process in some clinical settings; one organization (National Therapeutic Recreation Society) formed to meet the needs of persons with disabilities and their recreation pursuits; "dumping" persons with mental, physical, and developmental disabilities from institutions into communities is mandated by law;
<i>Special Olympics 1968-Architectural Barriers Act of 1968-</i>	Special Olympics movement was initiated by the Joseph P. Kennedy Foundation; established standards for accessibility to public buildings;
<i>Rehabilitation Act of 1973 section 503- Education for All Handicapped Children Act of 1975-</i>	created opportunities for students with disabilities in extracurricular activities and programs receiving federal assistance; the first major legislation related to providing a free and "appropriate" education for children with disabilities, changed to ' <i>Individuals with Disabilities Education Act</i> ' in 1990, Reauthorization occurs in 1995; National Consortium on Physical Education and Recreation for the Handicapped was formed;
<i>NCPERH began 1975 - Amateur Sports Act of 1978-National Standards completed 1979 -</i>	created unification of Disabled Sport Organization under the auspices of the United States Olympic Committee; National Therapeutic Recreation Society set general standards for clinical and residential settings;



*Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA)-*

an attempt to change societies attitudes toward individuals with disabilities by enhancing opportunities in jobs, public facilities, telecommunications, and public ground transportation, "INCLUSION" is introduced and addressed = the CONCEPT of valued active relationships between people with and without disabilities in a typical setting (Beaver, 1995).

Richard Wolf (1995), highlighted the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) - five years following its proposed mandates. The experts said that the benefits of this legislation appeared to outweigh its burdens. The following are accomplishments that ADA can boast after the first five years:

- Fifty percent of the nation's small towns have added ramps, made renovations to public facilities, provided services to people who are def or visually impaired as a result of the ADA, and most say that the costs were "reasonable".
- Job opportunities have become enhanced, both in quantity and quality. Attitudes are changing along with the architectural modifications. A poll by Louis Harris & Associates showed that more than 80 percent of employers who have made some kind of "change" as the result of the ADA say that the benefits were worth the costs of installing automatic doors, lowering counters, widening parking spaces, etc. Although the increase of hiring people with disabilities only rose from 62 to 64 percent, public attitudes toward people with disabilities have changed. With heightened public awareness comes faith that the dreams and desires of Americans with disabilities can come true (Wolf, 1995).

Continuing education and networking are two other factors which assist the practitioner when developing a comprehensive program. In addition to courses at colleges and universities, various conferences and workshops are available for the practitioner focusing on the community and clinical setting or both. In the United States, four national associations provide state, regional, and national conferences offering information on current issues as well as standards and networking opportunities.

- 1) the American Alliance of Health, Physical Education, Recreation and Dance - Adapted Physical Activity Council;
- 2) National Recreation and Parks Association - National Therapeutic Recreation Society;
- 3) American Therapeutic Recreation Association; and



4) United States Olympic Committee - Committee on Sports for the Disabled.

These national associations offer ample continuing education opportunities, not only through workshops, but also through publications. Other publications this author would like to recommend are: *Palaestra*, *Sport & Spokes*, *American Camping Magazine*, *Adapted Physical Activity Quarterly*, *Disabled Outdoors*, and the *National Therapeutic Recreation Journal*. Learning what others are accomplishing and programming, both through formal and informal networking avenues, is as valuable as any other factor mentioned in this paper. We learn from other's successes and failures. Working together, we can be much more productive and effective in meeting the needs of clients, whether we practice in the clinical or community settings.

In the opinion of the author, as programs are developed, relying to a certain degree on intuition is warranted. As professionals network and develop through experience, they gain a "sense" for what will work and what will not work. Additionally, a practitioner who is responsible for program development should possess some visionary traits, the ability to look beyond the present. Goldberg (1983), writes that our decisions and actions spring from what we know. He writes that intuition may well be the "quality difference" in successful organizations, where the standard is about innovating, initiating, creating, and envisioning and away from the pattern of control-order-predict. This is an organization where people agree to be taken to new places and try new things and the new ideas which evolve are not determined through ordinary means. Toffler (1970) wrote "that it is more important to be imaginative and insightful than to be 100 percent right."

Professionals have to take risks when predicting what programs will exist and be effective in the future, those risks are necessary steps in reaching new horizons in the organization and in the field of therapeutic recreation (TR). As the author assisted with the development of the strategic plan for Recreation Unlimited - National Challenge Center for People with Disabilities, all of the factors mentioned heretofore were considered: (1) historical perspective; (2) information gathering through networking and conferences; (3) intuition as a practitioner for fourteen years; and (4) knowledge of future trends related to society and persons with disabilities. Based on the previous factors and strategic planning information which was gathered from a market survey of users and potential users, issues were addressed and presented to the board of directors in 1994. The issues were, and still are, imperative to consider as the development of new programs in the short term and long term take place. The issues addressed in the Program Development Director's proposal include the following:



- 1) Adventure Recreation is still of interest to society in general and to consumers with disabilities, but opportunity is still lacking.
- 2) There is a need for Transitional Programming in various settings: (1) rehabilitation; (2) group home; (3) adult care; and (4) others. Therapists need resources to conduct such programs effectively.
- 3) Enhancing visibility and creating linkages with the health care field is imperative if future ventures are a goal.
- 4) Accountability for 'what' Recreation Unlimited does for and with clients is essential if credibility is desired.
- 5) The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) will create more opportunities for persons with disabilities. Conducting workshops with businesses related to including persons with disabilities in the work place would communicate a positive leadership role that Recreation Unlimited plays in the lives of the clients served. Planning for the 'inclusion philosophy' in programming is essential (Challenge Levels). Serving as an information resource for family, clients, professionals, and care providers will become more critical as society "changes" its view toward people with disabilities.
- 6) Developing a training center for leaders and participants in the areas of fitness and sport for persons with disabilities is where Recreation Unlimited can "make its mark" due to the limited resources presently available.
- 7) Conducting research in the areas of recreation, camping, sport, and fitness for people with disabilities will assist our mission of becoming a "leader".
- 8) Incorporating the mature adult into our programs is essential given the latest demographics of this group - one of every eight people is over 65 years of age. In addition, there are more "active" individuals in this age group than ever before.
- 9) Develop linkages with related agencies and corporations to establish programs that provide training opportunities for young athletes in various sports.
- 10) Become a training center for elite athletes who possess disabilities.
- 11) Research and define appropriate relationships with institutions of higher education.

As Recreation Unlimited forges in new directions and program areas, the overall goal of programs remains constant; enhancement of the "quality of life" to those that are served.



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