

Evaluation of the 2005 Summer of Service Program

Children's Discovery Museum of San Jose

Children's Discovery Museum
<http://www.cdm.org>

Evaluation by OpenEye Innovation Management, Inc.
<http://www.openeyegroup.com>

Executive Summary

Introduction

Summer of Service (SOS) is a summer camp for youth entering 7th-10th grades designed and managed by the Children's Discovery Museum of San Jose. SOS operates four two week camps between June and August providing five teams of youth an opportunity to work in the museum, mentor young children, participate in environmental service activities, engage in community outreach, and develop specialized media skills. Youth may enroll in one or all four sessions.

Goals of the Evaluation

- To identify the impact that SOS has on participants, especially related to certain developmental assets, and key program activities via youth and parent opinion;
- To explore the role SOS plays in increasing museum capacity through its staff training and youth development programming.

Questions

1. What are the social and developmental assets of the youth participants in SOS?
2. What are the opinions of the participants on key aspects of the program?
3. What are the opinions of the participants' parents on key aspects of the program?
4. How does SOS staff perceive themselves as part of the overall Museum community?

Key Findings

- Approximately 70% of the parents agreed or strongly agreed with the statement "I have noticed a positive change in my child's behavior since his/her participation in this program."
- 83% of youth in the program say they will do community service again
- Meeting new people and making friends was cited by 72% of the youth as their favorite aspect of the program not related to community service work.
- 93% of the youth in the program rated their overall SOS experience with a score of 7 or higher on a scale of 1 to 10.
- 70% of SOS youth believe that adults in their town or city make them feel important, that adults listen to what they have to say, and that adults care about people that are of middle-school age. 95% of the SOS participants also agree with the statement that adults in the SOS program make them feel important and listen to what the youth have to say.
- 83% of the staff in SOS say they have a greater interest in a career that involves public service, community, or education as a result of their work experience in SOS

Highlighted Conclusions

- 2005 SOS youth built important relationships with peers outside of their schools and neighborhoods and with adults other than their parents. They involved their parents in discussions about their experience in the program and were exposed to adult professionals from a variety of fields.
- The youth participants felt as though they are contributing to the community, and when asked, had no shortage of ideas on how they might contribute to their neighborhood in the future.
- Results from the staff survey strongly support the notion that SOS contributes to the museum's goal of creating a respectful and collaborative environment. The SOS program and the Museum, in general, provide them with rich opportunities to grow.