



# Building the Coaching Pipeline

## In Brief

Coaches are the heartbeat of park and recreation sports but finding-and keeping-coaches isn't getting any easier. Park and recreation professionals in Perris, California, something different to tackle the coaching dilemma, testing creative people-first strategies to recruit coaches and support them beyond the sidelines.

The result? Fifty-one percent annual cross-sport coach retention, 33 percent program expansion capacity, waitlists that now equal 50-100 percent of enrollment and a transformation from desperately seeking any volunteers to selecting among qualified applicants.



A youth sports program in action. Photo courtesy of City of Perris (California) Parks and Recreation.

## The Challenge

In City of Perris, California, the volunteer pool was severely limited, forcing staff to accept any willing volunteer- regardless of preparedness. This created a damaging cycle: coaching quality suffered, leading to parent complaints, yet those same parents were reluctant to step into coaching roles themselves. Without enough qualified coaches, the department struggled to expand programming to meet community demand, and retention was a constant challenge, as volunteers felt unsupported and overwhelmed.

## City of Perris

In 2024, the City of Perris Community Services Department served approximately 80,000 residents in Riverside County, with an anticipated growth of 1,000 residents during the next 1-2 years. The department provides sports programs for children grades 3-8.

## A Model for Growing Confident Volunteer Coaches

In 2024, the city received funding via a grant from NRPA and the Million Coaches Challenge. The grant enabled the agency to provide access to the “How to Coach Kids” training (presented by Nike in partnership with USOPC) plus implement strategies that helped overcome common obstacles to coaching:



**Personal Recruitment:** The city called parents individually, using low-pressure, values-focused messaging to appeal to the desire to create meaningful experiences with their kids: “This is your chance to coach your child.”

**Materials and Mentorship:** The city built confidence by preparing volunteers early (pre-season handbook, Q&A and live practice demonstrations). New and experienced volunteers were paired together for support.

**The “Village” Model:** The city expanded ways parents could get involved by using a shared “village” coaching model, offering gradual entry roles like assistant coach or team manager, and leveraging group moments during practice demos to inspire multiple parents to step up together.

A group of youth practices basketball with their coach. Photo courtesy of City of Perris (California) Parks and Recreation.

The city's efforts made measurable change:



30%

Increase in Volunteer Commitments



51%

Annual Cross-Sport Coach Retention



50-100%

Waitlist Occupancy Across Sports Offerings

## Build Capacity and Community Through Supported Volunteers



“You could tell this wasn't thrown together. Everything was well organized, fun and created memories our kids will carry with them. – *Perris Coach*

The city's efforts had real results. Families now stay engaged from ages 3-14, and new partnerships with local clubs and adult leagues have created a connected ecosystem that supports volunteers and reinforces training standards.

## Lessons for Other Practitioners

- **It's a combined effect:** Supporting volunteers via training and consistent mentorship is far more effective than supplying materials alone.
- **Recruit the group, not the individual:** Group-moment recruitment distributes responsibility, reduces pressure, and produces more committed, collaborative teams.
- **Build an ecosystem, not a silo:** Partnerships with adult leagues and local clubs expand the volunteer pipeline, reinforce quality and support family engagement.



“Success wasn't about numbers, it was about people. By building trust, staying persistent and creating opportunities for connection through sports, we proved that a strong community can build something special together. – *Perris Recreation Coordinator*

## Conclusion

Seemingly small actions can have big impact — as long as you keep your community's needs front and center. Visit NRPA's Youth Sports Framework for more.

## To Learn More

NRPA Contact: [youthsports@nrpa.org](mailto:youthsports@nrpa.org)

City of Perris Community Service  
Department: Ezra Adu-Gyamfi [eadu-gyamfi@cityofperris.org](mailto:eadu-gyamfi@cityofperris.org)

This project was made possible through NRPA and the Million Coaches Challenge, powered by the Susan Crown Exchange

### About NRPA

National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA) is a national not-for-profit organization dedicated to ensuring all people have access to parks and recreation for health, conservation and social well being. For more information, visit [www.nrpa.org](http://www.nrpa.org).



NATIONAL RECREATION  
AND PARK ASSOCIATION