PROGRAMMING FOR ALL AGES

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This is a time of challenge and change, of readiness and adaptability. Are we, the recreation programmers, going to be the leaders, the survivors, or the victims? Are participants bearing a path to the recreation programs offered by your agency? Or, has the changing world left you and your department with less credibility toward meeting the leisure needs of your constituency? Perhaps we need to become more aware of the present to foresee the future of our agency may have a vital impact on the types and kinds of leisure services your agency offers. Let's examine the highlights from Nats-

by's book, Megatrends, as well as its Update '83:

- **Demographic changes**—The "Baby Boomers" (born 1946-60) with their 75 million are coming. What do we do about the "baby boomers"—projected five million by the year 2000. The "graying" of Americans means people are living longer and more active lives (millions are active economically and still want romance in their lives).
- **Changes in the family structure**—In only 34 percent of the households in which the sole breadwinner is the father, both parents work and one out of six children live in a single parent family; and the number of non-married couples is increasing. Common are the resulting stepfamilies and stepchildren.
- **Shifting from either to multiple options**—With shifts in jobs, lifestyle, where to live, where to recreate, hours to work, and also a shift from mass to an individualized society, people need leisure experiences that they can do alone or with one or two others.
- **High tech/high touch**—The more technology is intro-
duced, the more close involvement is needed to compensate for the impersonal nature of our lives.
- **Self-help**—We are learning to trust and rely on our-

selves.

- **Participatory democracy**—Those who have a share in the planning and decision-making are discovering the political power to set their priorities. And as we stress our regional and geographic differences, instead of our similarities, we celebrate our roots and become de-
centralized.
- **A world economy is emerging**—There is a renaissance in the cultural arts (dance, music, drama); the necessity exists for being a communicator par excellence—com-
petency in two other languages such as French, Spanish, German, Russian, or Chinese, as well as computer language.
- **Information society**—We need to create and value a different kind of labor—knowledge (mental) and language arts; we are in the thinking business.
- **Long term v. short term**—There is an awareness of the need to sacrifice now for the future—activities with carry-over value done alone or with others and pro-
gram that the don't always require expensive equipment, supplies, or extensive space.
- **Networking**—Because hierarchies have failed to solve society's problems, this has forced people to talk to one another.

Now, keeping society's trends in mind, let's think about how they can affect the recreation programs and services offered in your community. First, let's examine program possibilities for the following:

**Pre-School Age Child**

Preschool programming is one of those recreational programming areas that brings with it an equal amount of headaches and rewards. Luckily, the headaches fade with efficiency and patience, and the rewards shine in a lifetime of participation and a positive outlook from our young people regarding the value of recreation in their lives. When pre-school age children's memories are full of positive feelings about the recreation center, these memories will continue with a lifetime of participation.

Babies, babies, babies! Thank goodness for the baby boom. Just as we began selling school buildings, becoming bored with programming, and concentrating on other recreational areas—what a welcome new ballgame! As we study the national trends, we find our traditional pre-
school programming falling short of the needs of our par-
ticipants. Where do we start?

First, let's break the traditional barrier of program-
ning for children ages three and over. While doing that we will include parents, babysitter, and whoever is now providing care to our infants and pre-
schoolers. Infants? That's right. Let's get them started with a lifetime of activity. Infant fitness and exercise pro-
grams not only benefit our infants, but also those who accompany them to class.

Because the benefits to child and mom or dad, there comes a whole new outlet for networking. With our "yuppy" families in the suburbs, quite often their company interaction begins with the birth of a child. Women who have lived in a community for years, but who have worked full-time, find themselves home all day with children but without friends in the neighborhood. Attending infant instructional programs, then, in-
trouces mom to a new group of friends, all in her same situation. In our cities, apartment buildings become in-
dividualized homes once the doors close. In the "coldness of urban living, we miss that "networking." Do children need their "young infants" just about anything you are willing to try—exercise, swim, music, rhythms, massage and body manipulation, to name a few. Let's find a way to find and do more infant and dad. Throughout the world, we always assumed mothering was inborn. Parenting in the 1980s and 1990s is an art form consisting of instruction, direction, and guidance. And we are not just the group willing and brave enough to try it.

Next, the timing for our infant and pre-school pro-
gramming must begin to change. You can have the most innovative and attractive selection of pre-school ac-
tivities, but if the times are incongruent or designed for only those available in the daytime, success is problematic. Early evening, Saturday and Sunday mornings and afternoons are all becoming quality pro-
gramming times for pre-school programs. Shorter ses-
sions and short-term commitments are increasingly more attractive. Mini-courses in the more specific ac-
tivities like "Infant Music Appreciation" or "Art of Infant Massage" are very suitable to the mini-series approach. Come up with special events for infants and parents that fits all of the above needs as well as providing a terrific public relations gimmick. Moms, dads, siblings, and grandparents can all get involved in an inter-gen-
erational approach to an old idea.

So, programmers, go forth and create. Remain flexible, think positive, and the challenges of the 80's and 90's will pose no new threat to those of us in the people business. After all, the basic needs remain the same, our goals re-
mains the same. It's only the tools we have to adapt. Our craft relies on our imagination. The possibilities are limitless: for example:

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**Adventures Programming and Special Events**

- **Take a Hike.** A series of tours which lets you walk the trails of the local parks and environmental areas. Each day in a visit to a new site. Explore the plants, little creatures, and other wonders of nature from a pre-school point of view.

- **Kiddie Cancer and Parent, too!** A mini-series to acclimate young parents to cancer or hospitalizing experiences. First session: crafts, songs, stories, film; second session: cancer in pool and lifeguard drill. Third session: cancer trip.

- **Family Camp-out!** Baby's first overnight in the local park—parents, a must; siblings, welcome. Great dry run for first-time camping parents. Tent supplies are supplied; activities and meals baby-sized.

- **Urban Picnic.** A special event held in two sessions. First ses-

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**Cultural Arts**

- **Kiddie Computer.** Games and manual skills development with computers.

- **Craft and Kin.** The toddler's first craft experience. Cut, paste, and color very special projects. Moms and dads are guided on enhancing children's artistic interests.

- **Kiddie Cooks.** Simple recipes for parents and kids. Make a meal as a family and let kids do as much as they desire.

- **Miniature Monte Festival.** Carousels, cartoons, nature, short subjects of interest to tots. Parents need not attend.

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*Activities that can be adapted to include infants and children younger than three years of age.*
Sports/fitness/dance:

*Sports/Tot. Experience in exercises and fitness. Infants with coordination and small motor dexterity skills. Toddler improves basic skills while being introduced to exercise and sports.
*Sports/Tot. Gym. For ages 3-5, without parents.
*Junior soccer. Pre-schoolers' first experience with soccer.
*Gym and Games. A games class for toddlers...
*Infant Massage. For parents! Learn the art of massage to enhance your child's growth.
*Tot/Toddle Time. The parents to guide the children's water experiences!

Creative Movement and Dance:

Creative Rhythms.

Tap Dance kids. A tap dance introduction for pre-schoolers.

Junior Roller Derby. Parents and child's first roller-skiing experience. Toddlers only make the session slower and less intimidating.

Games Baby Play. Parents and babies learn songs, stories, and games.

SIX TO TWELVE-YEAR-OLDS

Although all children are basically alike, each is unique as his or her fingerprints. Every individual has his own timetable and manner of development. Therefore, some characteristics are fixed and cannot be changed. As each child grows, new problems and experiences begin to appear.

For this group, it may be more appropriate to focus on the physical and emotional development of the child, as well as his or her growing sense of independence.

One-third of elementary-age children are "Latch Key Kids" and have additional burdens of growing up with loneliness, fearfulness, vulnerability to danger, and lack of adequate supervision. Is it your agency, neighborhood, and community ready to face the Latch Key dilemma? Someone must.

Planning the recreation program with the six to twelve-year-olds, keep in mind that the American child is changing:

- Some children are addicted to TV; very few are limited to programs designed for children, and many of their programs are filled with violence and anger.
- They are more mature than they were ten years ago—more sophisticated, street-smart, and smarter.
- Many have played the big city and can tolerate the big city.
- Most are partial to the quick solution and the happy ending.
- This age group believes in magic and is often intolerant of rational explanations.
- The children are more excitable, sometimes more interested in their toys than they are to be and, they require more feedback.
- Dirty pictures are widely available now.
- They laugh more easily, love jokes and funny sayings.

- Their attention span is attenuated.
- A lot more children are angry and disturbed.
- They have been exposed to TV's violence, forcing them to confront specific differences in male and female roles are emerging.
- Race is a problem as are other differences such as language, ethnic background, religion, and economic status.

As programers, we need to keep our wits about us...at all times...for ideas that have the potential impact on our six to twelve-year-olds. Think about:

*Maine waterfalls! Jetpacks up the water chutes of gullar pipe! Victoria's Secret! water polo; swimming; canoeing; sailing; tennis; chalking; chants; talking songs; rounds; clapping games; bluegrass; country/western.


Serve Action/label cars for the blind, in braille; read to the blind: recycling center participation; take water to the animals at the Aqarium: Olympic: learn to be a baby sitter or lawn caretaker: gift wrap: community clean-up projects: race: take care of help with ash and snow removal: polish silver: tutoring.

Dance. Chugging, tough dancing; tap dancing; pom pom squad; baton twirling; Indian dancing; country/western; ballet; folk dancing to contemporary music; Irish step dancing.


Camping, Nature, Interpretation: sundial (time telling) with shadow animal: tracking: metal detecting: rock skipping:


Social Recreation: cooperative games; balloon volleyball; mixes: theme parties; casino night; slumber party.

Remember that each day comes bearing its gifts. All you have to do is license the ribbons.

TEENS

Do you remember the last time you asked a teenager what he or she wanted to do for fun? If the answer startled you, don't be alarmed. Some of the most successful teen programs are those that appear to break established norms of behavior, but actually operate solidly within established policy parameters. Teens enjoy participating in activities that they perceive to be bending the rules. Unusual and daring programs are easier to sell to teens. Creatively titied activities promote interest through the most important advertising tool—word of mouth.

Getting teens interested enough to talk about the program is one thing. Planning for teacher awareness regarding a credibility level that will snowball with increased teen interest, media attention, and parental support. The following are some examples of programs that get kids talking. Some provide long-term benefits; some are just for the fun of it.

**Hardware Wars.** Using school computers, teens compete to develop the best program for solving a given problem. The competition involves computers for computer games similar to "clue" using school or center staff as characters.

**Data-Hook.** Computing for Safe Hawks Day. The International Data Line. Matching a pen pal with your match or matching another correspondence with a school in another country. Swappadale software.

**Tennis.** Show a weekly show on your local cable TV community channel, written, acted and produced by teens about tennis. Selected video shows on the theme of Homecoming Dance.

**Nerds are Nice.** Teens other staff dress like Nerds and video tape brief statements. These are played during a dance and voted by the teens.

**Video Disc (Dry Ears E. D.)** Using video equipment and a projection-type TV show. Show the latest rock video. Weekly light rays and general activities for replay later in the night.

**Animal House.** Disguising, but fun: Beach contests, ladder hops, water pole in the pool, pin the tail on the prepy, and, finally, a food fight.

School's Out State. Roller skating relays, races, dancing and party all in one. A different place each week. Triathlon Challenge. Use traditional competition or submitting your own events. Use teams of three or individuals.

Night Out Trips. Combine activities like bowling, movies and bar hopping. Must start but midnight and stay out all night.

Balloons Bash, Bid Raisin, etc. If you can make it float or roll, why not race it? Biologicals, hot air balloons, screwcars—anything goes.

Walk the plank. Splash Party. Teens make their own walk-on water shoes. Provide D.I.Y. or show one of the "101 Ways to Have a Christmas to Remember" videos or "Creature from the Black Lagoon" in 3-D. Dance Bash. Collect old junk and trash from park or school and nail, tie or glue it all together for an ecology sculpture ball. New Year's Eve Lock-in. Have an all-night party, locked in at your center or school.

**Ghost Tour.** Pick a dark and gloomy night to tour the area near your local ghost, or just make it all up. Make cubbing of all kinds.

**Foxy Ladies.** Color analysis combined with makeup and hair style advice.

**Ballet Sculpting.** Learn the way you want to through aerobics, diet and exercise.

**Screaming Movies.** Stress management for teens.

**Hot Dog Ski Clinic.**

How to Use Your Girlfriends/Boyfriend for Fun and Profit. Seminar on interpersonal communication and sensitivity.

Workmanship. This may be the most important program you could provide this season. A variety of age levels works on various jobs such as office work, clean-up or painting, and program assistants. Instead of being paid, they receive a credit of $2.50 per hour. By a record book. Credit dollars may be used toward any teen class, trip, or other activity. Teens receive an early job reference, on-the-job training, and possibly some feel for a career. By "moving" some of your part-time personnel monks, you can get a teen a job, save you some money, and get them back in your revenue accounts and permits many youths the opportunity to participate in higher cost activities such as many high adventure programs.

ADULTS

The adult community, ages 20-50 years, has become progressively more affluent, status-conscious, and mobile. The emergence of "yuppies" (young urban professionals) has created a new lifestyle characterized by travel and tourism, and the world of fashion, can be expected to impact on the leisure services profession to a great degree. The renewal of these trends, some new programs need to be developed and old programs need a new twist to accommodate this adult age group.

The adults of today and tomorrow are a challenging group. They are increasingly more demanding, more politically active, and influential in your community. They want quality programs which are geared towards their needs. As a recreation professional is to motivate and maintain interest in new activities. Some of the activities and suggestions listed should prompt new enthusiasm for innovative programs.
one, women's organized sport programs will flourish. Try a Family League where at least one parent and one child or only one parent with others and their children. Obviously, rules would need to be adjusted for size, age and other factors influencing the safety of the activity. Good sports to attempt with Belinda, volleyball, soccer and bowling. Multi-interest groups should be encouraged, as well. The next step could be a “Soccer Camp” to cater to all age levels, combining fun with exercise and skill development.

Outdoor Adventure: Look for an increased interest in high-risk, high-adventure programs as people try to counteract the highly predictable, programmatic, wall-and-camp-like world of high technology. Ballooning, wind-surfing, rafting, sailing and island hopping can enhance the day's activities, packaged for entertainment, amusement, learning, horse-riding, windsurfing, snorkeling, scuba diving and snowboarding should even be more popular in the coming years.

Social Events — Single Parent Family Nights: To meet the new family lifestyle, re-design the traditional Family Night program to provide activities for the youth and socialization for the adults.

Food and Beverages: "Food and Beverages: A Taste of Italy" (for France, China, Mexico, etc.). Sponsor a travel lecture from a local tour group with a social afterward featuring a tour guide from an Italian-speaking country. Offer a tour of the city for people who are interested, but who have no regular partner to meet, or others who share the same interest.

Gourmet Food Gifts/Ethnic Food Gifts: "A Taste of Italy" (for France, China, Mexico, etc.). Sponsor a travel lecture from a local tour group with a social afterward featuring a tour guide from an Italian-speaking country. Offer a tour of the city for people who are interested, but who have no regular partner to meet, or others who share the same interest.

Changes in Family Structure: "Teenagers and the College: Life in the 21st Century" (for Europe, China, Mexico, etc.). Sponsor a travel lecture from a local tour group with a social afterward featuring a tour guide from an Italian-speaking country. Offer a tour of the city for people who are interested, but who have no regular partner to meet, or others who share the same interest.

SENIOR ADULTS

In order to meet the challenges and needs of elderly part participants will demand in the future, it will be necessary to offer outside the realm of what is usually called "recreation" and look toward other fields such as education and health. Cooperative efforts between all agencies serving seniors, health care, recreation, educational, senior centers, community, and local government agencies could be strengthened. Networking with other agencies for programming, funding, facilities, and human resources will be necessary. Life expectancy at birth today is 75, up from 70 in 1980. Americans 85 and older are currently the fastest growing segment of the population.

However, agencies providing health care, services, education, recreation programs, senior volunteer organizations, the President's Council on Aging, state and local agencies as well as inter-agency coordination, networking with other agencies for programming, funding, facilities, and human resources will be necessary. Life expectancy at birth today is 75, up from 70 in 1980. Americans 85 and older are currently the fastest growing segment of the population.

Non-Senior Options: "A Healthy Life Concer" featuring sounds from a specific decade to draw the audience to who were not at that time in an effort to recapture, revive, or remember about days gone by; "Destination Unknown" — Trips to undiscovered places via bus or van with darkened side eras; "Fork and Knife: A picnic by a waterfront, a view of a spectacular sunset, musical entertainment, games, or anything you can imagine to make it come true! This program again contradicts the predictable lifestyle of most of these individuals. "Nostalgia Night" — An evening of preferred items from the lifetime of this age group. Films like "Laurel and Hardy," the "Three Stooges," "The Marx Brothers," "The Honeycombers," "Leave It to Beaver" could be included. Re-introduces fads such as the hula hoop, marbles, tops, tricyles, and skateboarding.

Shift to Multiple Options: "Health Supplements. Have co-op traveling groups who trade houses with others who would like to travel but can't afford the inconvenience of being at home. Aquasport in water. Running in Denver Water Exercise—tread water. Kayak with You, Design a rock garden. Design Exercise or Walking Trails. This can be done in high rise, city street parks, etc. Word Processing. Computer Training. Stair-climbing: Make your own peanut butter. Thriller: Tubing, white water rafting for seniors."


Night Shift: How to spend evenings alone and not get lonely.

Self Help: Pre-Retirement Training. Nutrition Programs."

M.S.S. Marketing senior skills. (Entrepreneurship, design, art, music)"