



SUBMISSION FORM

All submission forms must include the following information. Separate submission forms must be turned in for each eligible program. **Deadline: July 1, 2023.** Please include this submission form with the electronic entry. If you do not receive an email confirming receipt of your entry within 3 days of submission, please contact [Gage Harter](#).

PROGRAM INFORMATION

County: County of Henrico
Program Title: Park Mobile
Program Category: Parks and Recreation

CONTACT INFORMATION

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SIGNATURE OF COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR OR DEPUTY/ASSISTANT COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR

Name: Brandon Hinton
Title: Deputy County Manager for Administration
Signature: 

Program Overview

Henrico County's Park Mobile is responsible for engaging the community through recreational activities and play, informing residents of programs and services, and unifying one another for a bright future. Park Mobile began as a response to challenges created by the COVID-19 pandemic and has continued to grow. Our main goal is to take the initiative to get to know our citizens in non-traditional ways: by going out into our parks and communities, programming for our residents where they live and play, and not always expecting them to come to us. During the last half of 2020, Park Mobile offered 72 programs with an attendance of around 2,700 and grew to 157 programs with 5,291 participants in 2022. Park Mobile is leading the effort to unify all departmental agencies to serve the Henrico community.

Problem/Challenge/Situation Faced by Locality

Our world and life as we knew it changed as the pandemic developed; it was imperative that we began to conceptualize a new definition of programming. With the new barrier of COVID-19, it was essential that we continued to challenge ourselves to create safe recreational opportunities for our community. We asked, "How can we provide intentional and meaningful programming for our community and keep everyone safe?" This was at the stage when many people were working from home and children were going to school virtually, which resulted in a major influx of people coming into our parks to walk and bike our trails, use our shelters, or just be outside in a safe space. After a few visits to the parks and engaging with our citizens, it became apparent that people of all ages were looking for some sense of normalcy. Thus, Park Mobile launched with the goal of taking simple recreation activities outside to our community while creating positive relationships along the way. Park Mobile staff used imagination, teamwork, and consideration of costs, benefits, and risks to be successful.

How Program Fulfilled Awards Criteria

Recreation and Parks is not necessarily viewed as a crucial element in one's community. However, in Henrico County, our citizens believe the Division is important, essential, and an asset that offers opportunities for growth while enhancing their quality of life. It is evident, as seen in the number of quality programs and the continued participation growth, that Park Mobile has been embraced by its community. Park Mobile has brought about a new way of thinking and a new way to connect with our community, promoting and evoking laughter, fitness opportunities, and overall

positive well-being in our community. All of this has been accomplished while being good stewards of county monies during tough fiscal times.

How Program Was Carried Out

The major objectives of Park Mobile were to be accessible and safe; to determine through surveys and one-on-one interactions if our community was aware of all that we offered; to educate and create positive relationships with our citizens; and to celebrate county-recognized heritage months. Park Mobile provided “pop up” outdoor recreational activities with little to no direct contact and even produced activity kits for children and families to take home. We also started @HenricoParkMobile on Instagram so folks could see all the cool thing we were doing! Through development and implementation, it was important to “keep it simple” but also get creative and think past what had traditionally been done in recreation.

Henrico County is divided into five magisterial districts – Varina, Fairfield, Brookland, Three Chopt, and Tuckahoe – and is becoming more diverse every year. It is incumbent upon our Recreation Coordinators to be aware of the ever-changing human landscape within these districts, which enables the Division to serve its citizens equitably and offer programs that interest them. Below are some examples of Park Mobile programs offered in each area.

Varina District

Dorey Park - Chalk Art & Fitness Challenge

Park Mobile staff drew interactive chalk pictures, fitness challenges, and activities throughout Dorey Park to engage (and bring a smile to) the visitors in the park. Even though there was no way for us to determine precisely how many people would engage in the artwork, we knew that this was one small way we could provide a positive impact while staying safe. We also posted a fitness challenge video on Facebook that received 2,800 views.

Fairfield District

Eastern Henrico Recreation Center - Holiday Cheer

It was a chilly December day when Santa, Mrs. Claus, and their head elf ventured out into our parks to offer a little holiday cheer. They gave out 37 pre-packaged gnome greenery kits to adults and pre-packaged crayon kits to children. Their journey began at the recreation center with the pickleball players, then to the outdoor track. They received words of gratitude and thanks for the holiday cheer and greenery gifts. We shared a video of the interactions on Facebook which garnered 466 views.

Brookland District

Crump Park - Kayaking

This was our very first Park Mobile pop-up! We loaded 5 kayaks in a van and headed to Meadow Farm from 9 AM to noon and Echo Lake from 1 PM to 4 PM. Upon arrival at each park, we walked to the playgrounds and explained to the adults what we were offering. We also had the opportunity

to speak with residents walking and riding bikes. All participants were excited to be a part of this Park Mobile pop-up event. We were repeatedly asked, "When are you doing this again?!"

Three Chopt District

Short Pump Park - Dog Treats & Chalk Fun

Park Mobile prepared some goodie bags for our community at Short Pump dog park which included a dog biscuit, our business card, and a short little message of "We wuff you." We set up a table, sandwich board with a message, and a basket full of dog biscuits to attract the guests. While we were there, we also did some fun winter chalk drawings near the playground.

Pouncey Tract Park - Fitness Fridays

Park Mobile visited Pouncey Tract and made a Fitness Friday video of some exercises to perform at the three fitness stations in the park. The video received 913 views on Facebook and 813 views on Instagram.

Tuckahoe District

Deep Run Park - Deep Run Rocks

The park was loaded with people walking, playing, riding, and jogging. Kids were out of school and Park Mobile was on the move. We provided an opportunity for citizens of all ages to paint rocks and hide them in our parks, increasing community engagement.

Deep Run Park - Pirate Scavenger Hunt

Grace Community Baptist Church is located just up the street from Deep Run Park on Pump Road. The Moms Together group contacted Deep Run staff hoping for assistance in planning a fun outdoor activity. Working with them, we planned a pirate-style outdoor scavenger hunt. We hid 4 clues throughout our park to encourage them to explore its entirety. This outdoor activity provided an area for participants to feel safe while still engaging with their group.

Other

Dorey Park, Three Lakes Park, Eastern Henrico Recreation Center, The Springs Recreation Center, Cheswick Park, Dunncroft Park, Echo Lake Park, Crump Park, Deep Run Park, Pouncey Tract Park, and Springfield Park – Valentines in Our Parks

Valentines in Our Parks was born out of the need to heal the collective fatigue from our disconnection during the pandemic. We felt it was important for our community to know that we were thinking about them. What better way than Valentine goodie bags filled with a variety of fun games and Henrico swag? Most items we already had on hand. Our Valentine's surprise was a minimal financial investment with a large impact that made a buzz, so much so that it made the local news! Photos were also shared on Facebook and Instagram.

We have offered a variety of free programs including arts and crafts, kayaking, canoeing, pickleball, fitness, wellness, scavenger hunts, and several holiday activities. As Park Mobile develops, we hope to continue to reach our community in a variety of different and innovative ways!

Financing and Staffing

Our favorite quote comes from Richmond native Arthur Ashe: “Start where you are, use what you have, do what you can.” Due to the pandemic, no budget was allocated for Park Mobile programming efforts. Every attempt was made to utilize supplies we already had on hand to minimize expenditures. Fortunately, due to resources, we were able to provide creative programming at little to no cost. Examples of programming during this time were snowflake kits, chalk walks, dog treats, groundhog craft kits, gnome kits, and spreading holiday cheer. It wasn’t until April 2021 that Park Mobile began making projections and was given an operating budget. April-June 2021 (end of fiscal year)

Programmer	Contractual Services 50270	Food Supplies 50501	Educ. & Rec. Supplies 50513	Other Operating Supplies 50514	Part-Time Staff 50104	
Rec Coordinator #1	\$1,950	\$10	\$397	\$0	\$0	
Rec Coordinator #2	\$2,650	\$0	\$3,070	\$761	\$300	
Fitness Coordinator	\$7,095	\$0	\$500	\$0	\$993	
	\$11,695	\$10	\$3,967	\$761	\$1,293	\$17,726

Fitness soon became an integral part of Park Mobile. Fitness already had an operating budget for programming in our recreation centers. Due to the pandemic, we began holding the majority of our fitness classes like yoga, FitKids, and Zumba outside. Therefore, the actual Park Mobile fitness budget was minimal.

Fiscal Year 2021- 2022

50501		
Food	Park Mobile: East	\$500
	Park Mobile: West	\$500
50513		
Rec supplies	Park Mobile: East	\$4000
	Park Mobile: West	\$4000
50270		
Contractual Services	Park Mobile: East	\$5000
	Park Mobile: West	\$5000

To help navigate production and efficiency, we divided Henrico County into two different sections, east and west. We utilized staffing in each area to help with Park Mobile programming. Starting with Fiscal Year 2021-2022, Fitness became its own entity again. As Park Mobile continues to extend its reach in our communities and other Henrico County agencies, the budget will reflect that growth while remaining economical.

Program Results

With the county's new emphasis on engaging the public where they are, results and success can be measured in a few ways. Obviously, the first is the number of participants. However, that can be misleading and meaningless if the second and most important measure – satisfaction – is not achieved. Satisfaction not only extends to the customer but also to the employee. If the employee is not enjoying what they do it will reflect in their work and what they produce.

With the onset of the pandemic, Park Mobile began serving the community in August 2020. We deliberately ensured programs were offered in all the magisterial districts. The first program was kayaking at Meadow Farm and Echo Lake Park. Over 60 people participated. For the remainder of 2020, there were 72 classes offered with approximately 2,700 attendees. Some of the higher-attended programs were rock painting (132 participants) and Holiday Cheer (over 200 participants).

In 2021, the momentum continued with 201 programs and 5,959 participants. Highlights were Paper Airplanes and Snow Cones (119 participants), a Bike Rodeo (83 participants), Dragonfly Kits (100 people), Smooch the Pooch (35 participants), Salsa at Sunset (225 participants, up from the previous year), and Eastern Henrico Carnival (450 participants). Paddle in the Park continues to be successful wherever it goes.

As things began to open back up and more traditional programming was offered, the number of Park Mobile classes declined, but participation numbers were still positive: 157 programs with 5,291 participants. Park Mobile is morphing to include specific community-based programming, which will include other county agencies.

As for success related to satisfaction, a story comes to mind: During the 2020 holiday season, as mentioned previously, staff ventured out as Santa, Mrs. Claus, and their Head Elf to give away

gnome greenery kits. Along the route, two mothers were walking, and our staff stopped to speak with them. One of the women started crying because, with virtual school and all the extra pressures from COVID-19, she just had not had the time to think about Christmas. They were both overjoyed by what the staff brought to them that day, and the pleasure that showed on the faces of those in our parks is something that the staff still talks about! Other measures of satisfaction come from our Instagram page...

Wreath Making

hcCoakley - So much fun! Thank you!

Bike Rodeo

kimbrout - It was so fun!!!

laurendunn514 - This was super fun!!!! Nicest officers ever helping pump air into bike tires and being super encouraging to the kiddos! (And the Slurpee coupons did not hurt. 😊)

Brief Summary

Park Mobile was born of necessity during the COVID pandemic – especially as it became obvious that recreation and interaction were critical to overall well-being – to continue offering safe, engaging, and entertaining programming to our citizens. As Park Mobile has evolved, our main goal remains the same: to take the initiative to get to know our citizens in non-traditional ways, by going out into our parks and communities, programming for our residents where they live and play, and not always expecting them to come to us.

Park Mobile Supplemental Material

