



Agenda Item 5.E.
Approvals: _____
Dept. Head SA
Manager _____
Admin. Asst. _____

AGENDA REPORT

BEACHES, PARKS & RECREATION COMMISSION
Meeting Date: February 11, 2014

Department: Beaches, Parks & Recreation
Prepared By: Sharon Heider, Beaches Parks & Recreation Director

Subject: *COURTNEY'S SANDCASTLE CHARITABLE FOUNDATION 2013 ATTENDANCE REPORT.*

Fiscal Impact: None.

Summary: The Courtney's SandCastle Charitable Foundation organized volunteers to track attendance and use patterns at the Courtney's SandCastle Playground throughout the 2013 calendar year. Staff recommends that the Beaches, Parks and Recreation Commission receive and file the resulting analysis, and commend Foundation and its volunteers for their efforts.

Background: Courtney's SandCastle Universally Accessible Playground opened in early 2012. Spearheaded by City Councilmember Lori Donchak, the Courtney's SandCastle Foundation organized a team of volunteers to perform field work to study and document the parks use patterns. Volunteers would attend the park, track attendance, speak to users onsite, and document their findings.

Discussion: The resulting analysis concluded that the Courtney's SandCastle Universally Accessible Playground is a very well attended, well maintained, and much enjoyed amenity. Notably, the average daily attendance at the Playground in 2013 was 318 visitors. The complete results of the Foundation's excellent field work and analysis are attached.

Recommended Action: STAFF RECOMMENDS THAT the Beaches, Parks and Recreation Commission receive and file the Courtney's SandCastle Universal Playground Attendance Report 2013, and commend the Courtney's SandCastle Charitable Foundation and its volunteers for their efforts.

Attachments: Courtney's SandCastle Universal Playground Attendance Report 2013

Notification: Courtney's SandCastle Charitable Foundation



Courtney's SandCastle Universal Playground

Attendance Report 2013

Prepared by the Courtney's SandCastle Charitable Foundation

January 2014

Courtney's SandCastle Universal Playground: Attendance Report 2013

Summary:

1. **Courtney's SandCastle enjoyed average daily attendance of 318 visitors in 2013.** This is a remarkable accomplishment. The San Clemente playground opened in February 2012 and is the only universally accessible playground in south Orange County. On average, 138 adults and 181 children visit the park each and every day. The playground is especially popular among children under the age of 5 (126/day).
2. **While the playground is purposefully designed so that all children can play regardless of ability, attendance among visitors with special needs is not yet as high as expected.** In 2013, on average, about 5 visitors could be classified as having a disability. Observed during this research were MOPS (Mothers of Pacific Coast Church) and *Stroller Warriors Mom's Group* from Camp Pendleton, two groups who chose the facility for its unique universal access. One visitor was aware Capistrano Unified School District arranged field trips to Courtney's SandCastle for kids with special needs in the pre-school and elementary grades.
3. **Based on conversations with visitors, the playground attracts people primarily from San Clemente. However, regional appeal is evident.** Camp Pendleton, Dana Point, Ladera Ranch, San Juan Capistrano and Mission Viejo were also often mentioned as home by many visitors. Word of mouth is the most common way people learn of the playground. Many mention knowing a San Clemente resident as a source of playground awareness. www.courtneysandcastle.org was also mentioned as an information source.

4. **High attendance can be attributed in part to the playground's location in the successful Vista Hermosa Sports Park.** On weekends and after school, many visitors are in the park for organized sports or to use the aquatics center and plan their time to visit the playground. Additionally, the playground is a popular weekday playdate destination for parents with children under age 5 during the school year. The playground has special and growing appeal as a place for birthday parties as well.
5. **Not surprisingly, the biggest deterrent to playground use is extreme weather.** Attendance drops when temperatures are high, with lack of shade mentioned as a key reason. There are concerns about hot sun in the sandbox and children over-heating in direct sunlight. Many said the shade pavilion is not large enough to hold everyone who wants shelter. Wind, cold and rain also translate to lower attendance.
6. **Every square inch of the playground is enjoyed by visitors.** When asked about favorite aspects of the playground, just about every piece of play equipment is mentioned. The sandbox, swings, castle, pirate ship, and interactive panels got many mentions. Even the donation tiles are cited as educational and colorful. Importantly, many visitors offered awareness of the upcoming sensory garden and wondered when it would be complete. Visitors also appreciated the convenience of restroom.
7. **The playground has received exceptional maintenance from the city of San Clemente.** Visitors consistently comment positively about the cleanliness of the restrooms, the good condition of the equipment, and the litter-free environment. A key amenity in the playground is the fence that encloses it, and city maintenance has vigilantly maintained the fence and gates. Aside from normal wear-and-tear, there were very few reports of abuse of the playground. Smoking and use of skateboards/RAZORS are examples of misuse.

Action Items:

1. **Pro-active outreach to organizations and families with kids with special needs is a top priority, as this is the vision and mission of Courtney's SandCastle Universal Playground.** This can't be stressed enough as the next step for the playground's success and should be part of future strategic planning.
2. **Sun Protection is needed in the way of shade structures.** Adults consistently asked for more shade, especially in the summer months.
3. **The birthday party policy merits review, as table space (and shade) is limited.** Several visitors felt that birthday parties could dominate the playground unfavorably. Some requested more tables.
4. **The sign policy also merits review on three levels.** First, playground rules, for example to prohibit skateboards, RAZORS, etc. Second, educational or fundraising sign opportunities. Finally, the main entrance to the Vista Hermosa Sports Park might include playground way-finding.
5. **Continue high levels of maintenance.** The fence, the restrooms, the litter-free play areas, clean resilient flooring are all reasons visitors choose this playground. With the high use by toddlers, keeping high maintenance standards is essential.
6. **Share results with stakeholders.** Once approved by Courtney's SandCastle Charitable Foundation (CSCF), the report should be shared with city staff with a request that it be forwarded to Beaches Parks & Recreation Commissioners and also City Council. The report should be shared with the Friends Foundation. The report might also be made available through www.courtneysandcastle.org for grantors and others.
7. **Forward report to grant donors accompanied by a status report on the sensory garden.** This should be done in early 2014 to assure donors of sensory garden need and progress.

Background and Methodology:

Courtney's SandCastle Universal Playground is located in the Vista Hermosa Sports Park & Aquatics Center at 987 Avenida Vista Hermosa, San Clemente, CA 92673. Hours are 6:00am-10:00pm. Phase 1 opened spring 2012.

Phase 2, the sensory garden for children on the autism spectrum is scheduled to open in 2014. CSCF recognized a need to measure playground attendance to address 3 objectives: 1. metrics for grant applications, 2. understanding of use by kids of all abilities and 3. information to guide playground maintenance.

Methodology: Volunteers used a standard questionnaire and assigned a 2 hour interval to observe playground activity on weekends and weekdays. Data was then weighted to address the probability of double-counting visits with this methodology.* Special thanks to these volunteers, each of whom did one or more 2 hour stint in the playground to collect data in 2013: John Anderson, Lori Donchak, Bev and Don Glasgow, Angelica Hurtado, Jim and Joan Nielsen, Sharla Pitzen, Judy Price, Tim Shaw, Garrett Silverman and Bill and Diane Thomas.

CSCF Mission Statement:

To ensure that the Courtney's SandCastle Universal Playground provide every child in our community fun and interactive play opportunities regardless of their abilities, while improving the quality of life; and *foster diversity awareness, compassion and acceptance*. It is estimated that 18,000 children in Orange County have a physical, mental or sensory disability.

*Estimated 25 people per shift (2 in winter/fall, 3 in spring/summer). However, daylight hours before 10:00am and after 4:00pm (winter/fall) and 6:00pm (spring/summer) are not included in the study (estimated 25-50 visits), which cancels out any overstatement in counts. Average total daily visits is weekdayX5 + weekendX2/7. Assisted defined as wheelchair, stroller, walker, crutches or cane.

Courtney's Sand Castle Daily Attendance Study 2013

	<u>Avg. Total Year</u>	<u>Winter (Jan-Mar)</u>	<u>Spring (Apr-June)</u>	<u>Summer (July-Sept)</u>	<u>Fall (Oct-Dec)</u>
<u>Total</u>	<u>318</u>	<u>336</u>	<u>420</u>	<u>307</u>	<u>208</u>
<u>Weekday</u>	319	346	424	294	211
<u>Weekend</u>	317	321	410	339	201
<u>Adults</u>	138	139	183	140	89
<u>Kids</u>	181	200	237	167	118
0-5	126	121	152	127	99
6-12	52	79	79	30	17
13+	3	0	6	3	2
<u>Assisted**</u>	<u>5</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>10</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>2</u>

** Assisted defined as wheelchair, walker, cane, crutches or aide

Field Observations:

- Love the playground/fabulous place/(24)
- Positive playground equipment mentions (23) (variety, castle, swings, slides, pirate ship, panels, sand digger, sandbox...)
- Here to use pool/for soccer game/for sports activity (18)
- Always clean (15)
- When is sensory garden opening/how donate to sensory garden (14)
- Safe (13)
- Need shade/structure/shade over the sand/benches hot (13)
- Grandparent/grandchildren mentions (10)
- Child with autism, child being carried to accessible swing, wheelchair, Down's syndrome (8)
- Great place/many meetings for playdates (7)
- Inappropriate activity: RAZORS, skateboards, double-swinging, fence climbing, smoking (7)
- Pressure wash mats/spots on mats/rubberized surface is filthy (5)
- Military/Running mom's group/put playground in military communications/website (4)
- Not enough tables/ birthday parties monopolize tables (4)
- Paint one table for birthday parties/paint hopscotch games on pavement (3)
- Need vending machines for snacks (3)



Thank you for volunteering to help Courtney's SandCastle with attendance counts. This information is essential for the Foundation to apply for grants to keep the playground vibrant. Here are some helpful tips:

- 1. There are three entrances to the playground. You will need to be aware of all three. The "Moat" entrance is the most popular, but the restroom entrance is also used.**
- 2. We are interested in tracking information on different abilities. Make a note by the attendance number if a person (adult of child) uses a wheelchair, crutches, walker or cane. Strollers should also be indicated.**

- 3. A visitor can be counted more than once if they leave and return. You are counting entrances of the playground.**
- 4. Feel free to talk with people and tell them what you are doing. Record any useful information on the last page of the attendance sheet. Examples: where people are from, military affiliation, presence of grandparents as caregivers.**
- 5. Neatness is desirable.**
- 6. Remember that you are an ambassador to the playground.**
- 7. If people want more information, direct them to www.courtneysandcastle.org.**

General Comments

Any fun/relevant stories you saw/heard that might be useful to the playground success?

Weather: (circle one) Sunny Cloudy Rainy

Other _____

Cleanliness of playground. Note any areas needing attention here:

Cleanliness of restroom. Note any areas needing attention here:

Note any equipment that needs maintenance attention here:

Thank you for your important work at helping us measure playground attendance!

Courtney's SandCastle Attendance

TOTAL VISITORS: _____

Day of week and Date _____

TOTAL ADULTS: _____

Time (2 hours) _____

TOTAL KIDS: _____

Auditor Name _____

<u>Total</u>	<u>Adult</u>		<u>Kids</u>		<u>0-5</u>	<u>6-12</u>	<u>13+</u>	<u>Wheel</u>	<u>Chair</u>	<u>Walker/</u>	<u>Crutches</u>	<u>Stroller</u>
	<u>Male</u>	<u>Female</u>	<u>Male</u>	<u>Female</u>								

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Courtney's SandCastle Attendance (4)

<u>Total</u>	<u>Adult</u>		<u>Kids</u>		<u>Wheel</u>	<u>Walker/</u>				
	<u>Male</u>	<u>Female</u>	<u>Male</u>	<u>Female</u>						
					<u>0-5</u>	<u>6-12</u>	<u>13+</u>	<u>Chair</u>	<u>Crutches</u>	<u>Stroller</u>

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