

Welcome Centre Summary Information

ORIGINAL INTENT

The Welcome Centre was originally intended to be an experiment; it was designed to determine what information Park users would request from the Booth so that a more permanent Centre would be better able to cater to their needs. As an experiment it also looked at issues involving staffing, hours of operation, location and need for materials.

SET-UP

To obtain this data careful records were to be kept of the numbers of visitors and their particular requests. Data was collected in hourly segments for most of the summer and placed in categories to reflect the visitor's uses of the Park. (see pg 4)

J. Hodge suggested the booth as a possible site and R. Sorys approached the owner/manager of the Grenadier Restaurant for his permission for summer use. He agreed immediately noting that customers often used his wait staff as a source of information about the Park.

Helen Sousa arranged for signage on the booth. Diana Teal's husband, Oscar developed the sign designs. The materials, maps, directions, backgrounders, and information pamphlets were developed by Diana and printed from the HPCAC paper budget or obtained from the group producing them as advertisements. Only Park events qualified as legitimate advertisements. A draft of the original set-up was provided as a to-do list on May 25 to the organizers. (Details on request)

STAFFING

Diana Teal applied for a Federal Grant for summer program staff for the Nature Centre and HPI activities . Four staff were granted, one of which was provided to coordinate the activities of the Welcome Centre (Job Description on request) as part of the mandate.

The coordinator arranged for volunteers during her work period in the summer and was on hand some of the week-ends either in the booth or as back-up. Service Canada, the charitable arm of a number of local corporations provided a number of volunteers for three-hour stints. The week-end was organized into four three- hour periods with the hope that at least two volunteers would be present for each period. The major volunteers were Jerry Hodge, Robin Sorys and

Bernard Sanders,. Wendy Rothwell, Diane Bucknell and Gloria Worth were also frequent volunteers. I believe only one three-hour period through the summer did not have two staff persons present.

THE DATA

Each week the coordinator did a tally of the collected data and developed a spread sheet to itemize the results. (summer summary available on request)

RESULTS

Potential hours : 46 three hour sessions for a maximum total of 138 hours.

Actual hours: A soggy summer created a number of closings. 6 days had reductions in hours for a total of 10 hours so the actual open time was 126 hours.

There were a total of 1426 visitors. It should be noted that many were spokespersons for larger groups, but actual contact was what was counted. The average number of contacts was 11.1 persons per hour.

Frequency: Time of day for visits was important :

| | | |
|------|------------|--|
| 10AM | 122 visits | (frequency breakdown started in week 4) |
| 11 | 145 | |
| 12 | 204 | |
| 1PM | 217 | |
| 2 | 199 | |
| 3 | 177 | |

The lunch hours were the busiest time probably because the booth was on the restaurant's deck.

The majority of visitors were new to High Park or had not been there in a long time. Most of the requests were for directions to various Park venues and for maps. A small map was produced on standard typing paper and the staff used a highlighter to track paths or mark sites for the visitor to take. Some had more than one request. A tracking sheet was kept for each visitor's requests. (An estimate of 3 visitors for each actual contact reflected that the contact was made by one person on behalf of a group.)

PROJECT VS. PROGRAM – A CHANGE IN INTENT

Paid staffing for the program was the responsibility of HPI. The Coordinator's job is outlined in the "Responsibilities of the Welcome Centre Coordinator" available on request. As a part of the development of the Welcome Centre and primarily because of the staffing by HPI, the project became a program.

HPI's charter sets out to improve and educate visitors about the natural character of High Park. Education about the natural environment is within HPI's mandate but providing directions to Park users may not be. The staffing requirement under HPI would be to provide education to visitors, not just directions. So... to meet the charter requirements the Welcome Centre added a program to educate Park users about the natural environment in the Park. A nature walk developed by the coordinator was added to the information table for a small fee (\$2.00). This new program element was added late and was undersold by Welcome Centre volunteers. Some who used it and reported back were quite pleased with it, but this area needs development. The VSP booklets on Black Oak Savannah were available as well for \$15.00 but were again showed a similar pattern - undersold. Along with a donation box and "I love High Park" buttons a total of \$160.76 was collected. The education component needs to be rethought.

LIABILITY

The status of volunteers working under the auspices of HPI regarding potential legal difficulties resulting from their work with the public needs to be addressed. It is unfair to place volunteers in a vulnerable position without clear liability protection. One of the first duties of a non-profit is to protect its volunteers.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. The Welcome Centre Ad Hoc Committee be dissolved.
2. A new committee be established at the February Council meeting unless the current Welcome Centre is to be used next year with no change in leadership or direction.
3. The new HPCAC in conjunction with HPI determine which organization will take responsibility for the Welcome Centre and what its parameters shall be.
4. An education program for the Welcome Centre should be developed by HPI. It should emphasize the natural environment of the Park.
5. The Welcome Centre was a useful aid to Park visitors and should be continued next year again as an experiment with similar data collection with a view to a permanent installation.

Welcome Centre Statistics - Summer 2009

BY THE NUMBERS

number of contacts - 1426 persons counted in log

number of park visitors contacts represented - 4278 persons (~average three per party)

open hours - 10:00 am to 4:00 pm on weekends and holidays (weather permitting)

number of scheduled open days (Jul 1 to Sep 7) -23 days

number of actual open days - 23 days

number of scheduled open hours - 138 hours (rain closures - 10 hours over 6 days)

number of actual open hours - 128 hours

number of contacts per hour - 11.1 contacts (approx. 1 every six minutes)

total number of shifts served by volunteers (two per shift) - 90 shifts

number of different volunteers serving contacts during the summer - 25 persons

number of hours of service per volunteer per day - 3 hours per shift, 2 shifts per day

number of volunteers that served more than one shift - 20 persons (~average 3 shifts)

number of volunteers that served more than ten shifts - 3 persons

most frequent request - map - 970 park maps distributed

least frequent request – band aids -2

cost of project (excluding signage provided by Helen Sousa) - \$262.64 from HPI

all outstanding monies were covered by a donation to HPI. Net cost - \$000.00

paper costs were provided from the HPCAC paper budget

the booth was provided by the Grenadier Restaurant free of charge.

income from “I Love High Park” buttons and VSP Oak Savannah booklets - \$91.00

cash donations totaled \$160.76

Many thanks to HPI, all volunteers, Helen Sousa and the Ad Hoc Welcome Centre Committee