

City of Greenacres, FL

Demographic Information

- ★ Self-reported Suburban area with population of 32395
- ★ Poverty rate: 21.0%
- ★ Race and Ethnicity breakdown:

Non-Hispanic White	42.0%
Non-Hispanic Black or African American	16.0%
Non-Hispanic Asian	2.0%
Non-Hispanic American Indian and Alaskan Native	0%
Non-Hispanic Other	0%
Non-Hispanic Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander	0%
Non-Hispanic Other race	6.0%
Non-Hispanic Multiracial (two or more races)	2.0%
Hispanic or Latino	32.0%

- ★ Graduation Rate (%): 69.3%

Overview

The City of Greenacres' emulates what the "100 Best Communities for Young People" strives for through the five promises. The City Council, management and staff support the goal to provide exceptional opportunities for our children that is demonstrated through the budgeted funds, policy decisions, collaboration with other organizations, and support from community partners. Over ten years ago, Mayor Ferreri advocated for an after school program and was relentless until he obtained grant funding from the Children's Services Council for an affordable aftercare program for residents. The City currently serves over 320 children daily; with 170 children attending our licensed afterschool program which has 64 children on a waiting list due to its popularity. City youth participate in community service projects such as the Great American Clean-up, Adopt a Grandparent, Paint Your Heart Out, neighborhood block parties, canned food drives, holiday gifts for children in foster care, and special events on a monthly basis allow children to obtain a sense of fulfillment and self-worth by helping others. Unique opportunities provided are made possible through community collaboration, and activities that include: a week long camping trip in the Everglades through a sponsorship from the Pine Jog Environmental Center to learn about environmental conservation; a two week intensive training with the "ISH " performers to show off their talents; private sessions to the "Write-Note" recording studio to produce their own CDs; participate in "Media Literacy" projects where they produce their own Public Service announcements; week-long adventures to "Exchange City" where students develop and operate their own business; trips to Orlando theme parks, private "behind the scenes" tours of the Miami Sea Aquarium and the Marine Life Center of Juno Beach. Other

This year three of our high school youth have been granted scholarships to attend the National League of Cities Conference in New Orleans, which is a "once in a lifetime" opportunity that they will never forget! The City also supports staff and youth in painting their classrooms with "kid friendly" colors and murals on the walls to provide an environment the feels comfortable and safe. The youth athletics program offers youth soccer, basketball, cheerleading and flag football to our residents for one of the lowest fees in the county. The Greenacres Little League program also offers low fees for the youth; scholarships are provided to children of low-income families and no child is turned away due to inability to pay. The City has a Coaching Incentive policy where registration fees are waived for children of qualifying coaches. The City implemented an Employee Discount program to offer employees a 20% discount on activity and program fees for their family. The City Council has been careful in approving

projects and businesses that support and enhance the quality of family life and make a positive impact to the community at large. The City Council and employees work diligently to actively provide programs and activities that have Caring Adults, Safe Places, A Healthy Start, an Effective Education, and Opportunities to Help Others. The evidence of these promises have been achieved as demonstrated by the students who participated in our elementary school program (CARES), then to the middle school program (Cool Zone), through to the high school program (Hot Spot) to become employees of the City and then working with other students in fulfilling the five promises.

Commitment, Collaboration, Awareness, Data and Advocacy

- ★ CHILDREN'S COMMISSION: The Children's Services Council of Palm Beach County (CSC) was established in 1986 by the State Legislature and voters to levy taxes to assist children reach their full potential. The division of funds equates to 50% for children 0-5 years, 25% for afterschool programs, and 25% for family support services. The Board of Directors is made up of 10 members - 5 ex-officio and 5 gubernatorial appointed, including a County Commissioner. One of CSC's community initiatives with schools in our community is the Beacon Center programs which provide on-site financial support, after-school counseling food stamps, and other services.
- ★ The Kiwanis and Exchange Clubs collaborate with the City on bike giveaways, bike safety rodeo's with the Police Dept, and annual student recognition awards. PrimeTime of Palm Beach County provides the City with \$25,000 worth of enrichment and cultural programs. The Children's Home Society's "Focus on Promise" program provides participants and their families with a free on-site counseling program. Additionally, partnerships with Wal-mart, Sam's Club and Publix provide the programs with donated supplies and job applications for high school career exploration. The City hosts a Community Thanksgiving dinner for 500 people with coordination from 3 local churches.
- ★ In 1997, two Advisory Councils were formed, one for Cool Zone, our middle school program, and Hot Spot, our high school program, where youth are actively involved in program development, program implementation and leadership skills. Each council consists of a fifteen member panel that meets weekly to determine the direction of the program. The members obtain feedback and suggestions from their peers in order to plan and select monthly activities, field trips, community service projects, and policy development. The Advisory Council participants control the direction of the programs while gaining leadership and communication skills, learn respect of others and self responsibility. The City's youth participate in community-wide activities instilling civic mindedness. Community volunteer hours are recorded and qualified recipients for the Presidential Service awards are presented certificates by the Mayor at the City Council meetings in April. In April of 2007, over 2,875 volunteer hours were completed by 23 program participants.

Alliance Priorities: Dropout Prevention/School Readiness and the National Action Strategies

- ★ While the schools in Palm Beach County provide for the teaching of the students, the City expands the schools' role by providing intellectual development through homework assistance, computer training, and life skills activities such as "Teen Time" and "Guy-Girl Talk" which promotes positive social-emotional skills. Cultural arts opportunities are supported through field trips to numerous museums and productions. High schools offer on-the-job training programs and opportunities which are continued at the City level with job-shadowing opportunities, college tours, resume and job application review, and interviewing skills.
- ★ We also utilize the "Learning for Life" Character Education curriculum. The CARES and Cool Zone youth programs provide daily homework assistance, computer instruction, on-site Karate instruction, FCA tutorial, on-site counseling services, Jr. Counselor and CIT opportunities, field trips, and much more. Due to the existing State and County revenue tax cuts middle schools have been negatively impacted and many of the area middle schools have opted to reduce after-school opportunities. The City remains dedicated to ensuring that the services for the youth are continued in a quality and effective manner.
- ★ The City's Leisure Services Department provides essential transitional support mechanisms for students during both the elementary to middle and the middle to high school transition periods. Participants in our middle school program, Cool Zone, are able to develop beneficial and productive relationships with reliable, caring and productive adults, as well as positive teen mentors. These teen mentors are former Cool Zone members now enrolled in our high school program, Hot Spot. These responsible mentors have successfully transitioned to high school and are assisting their peers do the same. Career

exploration activities are offered such as week-long Jr. Achievement business sessions, Pine Jog Environmental Center, cultural pursuits at the Kravis Center for the Performing Arts Center, and job shadowing opportunities in various City departments.

Resources Youth Receive: The Five Promises

- ★ **Caring Adults:** The City provides various opportunities for youth to form nurturing relationships with responsible, caring adults through our volunteer and mentoring programs, athletic leagues and out-of-school programs. Many employees are also involved in the "Take Stock in Children" and Governor's mentoring program through the school system.
- ★ **Safe Places:** The City provides a licensed, year-round childcare enrichment program and recreational athletic leagues at our facilities to more than 1,375 children a year. The afterschool and summer programs serve over 200 children daily from 7:30am - 6:00pm. The children are picked up by City staff who are required to have a CDL and bused to the City's facilities.
- ★ **A Healthy Start:** In 1998 the Florida legislature created the KidCare program in order to provide low cost basic insurance benefits for children 5-18 years of age who do not have private insurance or qualify for Medicaid benefits.
- ★ **An Effective Education:** While the area high school offers on-the-job training programs and opportunities, the City continues career exploration in our programs with high expectations for our participants, and job-shadowing opportunities, City and college tours, assistance with completing applications and resumes, as well as programs such as; "Dress for Success" a session that teaches students how to dress, conduct themselves and interview techniques.
- ★ **Opportunities to Help Others:** The City tracks volunteer hours and in the past year, 23 children were awarded the Presidential Service Award due to their volunteerism, and even more are scheduled to receive the Award this year.

Media Issues/Challenges Identified:

This year's most challenging issue County-wide relating to young people has been youth involved in gang related violence. The City's most challenging youth issues has been gang-related graffiti, crime and a stagnating high school drop-out rate of under 50%. Such behavioral attributes stem from the basic need for acceptance, a voice, and a "sense of belonging." The City's Public Safety Department works extremely closely with the Palm Beach County Sheriff's Office Gangbusters and Gang Task Force, as well as the Palm Beach County School Board Truancy Officers in the 3 area middle schools and 1 community high school located within the City limits to prevent truancy and juvenile crime in an attempt to decrease gang activity and youth violence. The Palm Beach County School Board will now be staffing the five county-wide Truancy Intervention Centers as an alternative to closing them due to budget cuts. In 2007, 322 youth, 18 years of age and under were arrested—140 of those arrests were minor misdemeanor violations. The City's Public Safety Department has received praise by County Law Enforcement officials on being one of the most proactive members on the task force. Officers spend time with the offending youth asking them "why" they skip school, "why" they commit crimes, and truly try to help teens find a more positive outlet. Increased education by clergy and Public Safety Officers with parents and youth on the devastating effects of gang affiliation is also taking place consistently. The Leisure Services Department has seen an improved impact on this strategy with fewer children frequenting the Community Center during hours in which they should be in school. Employees don't allow students to enter the Center during school hours. The Public Works Department has also witnessed fewer youth out on the streets, hanging out in the parks, and are proactive in immediately removing graffiti quickly, especially that with a notation of gang affiliation. The City wants to send a strong, clear message that gang affiliation and activity is not an acceptable way of life, nor will negative and violent gang behavior be tolerated in the City. The City provides a multitude of alternative activities to empower, motivate, challenge and listen to our young people who may not be getting those supports in school or at home. To many of these children we are their home; we show more consistent means of caring and guidance. City employees know how important their roles are to our participants and will keep demonstrating this care, understanding, and guidance for the betterment of our children's and community's future!