

# **Wheaton Park District**

## **Lincoln Marsh Natural Area Challenge Course**



**2016 Annual Report**

**Mike Kelly, Challenge Course Supervisor**

## Summary

Lincoln Marsh Natural Area is 151 acres comprised of woodlands, marshes, and prairies and is highly valued for recreation, education, and environmental reasons. The Lincoln Marsh annually provides thousands of visitors with many outdoor activities including bird-watching, picnics, adventure programs, environmental education programs, and challenge course programs. Its two miles of trails connect with the Illinois Prairie Path and make it an ideal place to hike or cross-country ski.

*The Challenge Course division* of Lincoln Marsh provides over 500 challenge course programs to over 7,000 people annually. Challenge courses include Teams, Travel Teams, High Ropes, Climbing Tower, Power Pole, and Crate Climbing. Programs are offered for participants 1<sup>st</sup> grade through adult and serve a variety of groups which include colleges, elementary/middle/high schools, sports teams, youth-at-risk, students with special needs, PE leaders, peer leaders, scouts, churches, park districts, hospital staff, small businesses, and corporations. These programs provide opportunities for group, partner, and personal development. Participants experience the dynamics of team work, problem solving, leadership, trust, and support through a series of experiential activities. Trained facilitators tailor the activities to the objectives and capacities of each group. The experience has a broad range of applications for education, organizational development, and recreation.

The following report presents you with an opportunity to review the Challenge Course division for 2016.



# Lincoln Marsh Challenge Course

## 2016 Annual Report

The Challenge Course division is divided into two accounts which include Challenge Course programs (requested and brochure) and Team Adventure Camps. Requested programs are divided into four categories and include Youth/Family; Colleges, Park District/Teacher Professional Development; Adult Nonprofit; and Corporate.

The below chart compares program and participant amounts for the Challenge Course and Team Adventure Camps from 2015 to 2016.

Total Programs						
Type of Program	FY 2015		FY 2016			
	Programs	Participants	Programs	Participants	% Change Programs	% Change Participants
WPD Brochure	8	39	5	30	-38%	-23%
Youth/Family	475	6,374	425	5,920	-11%	-7%
Colleges, Park Dist/Teacher Prof Development	0	0	70	917	-	-
Adult Nonprofit	14	169	3	27	-79%	-84%
Corporate	33	406	29	358	-12%	-12%
Team Adventure Camps	4	36	4	47	0%	31%
<b>Total</b>	<b>534</b>	<b>7,024</b>	<b>536</b>	<b>7,299</b>	<b>0.4%</b>	<b>4%</b>

*Note: 2015 program and participant numbers do not include any adventure programs, which were transitioned to a different division in September 2015.*

**Summary:** There was a very small increase in overall programs of 0.4% from 2015 (534) to 2016 (536). Youth/Family and Adult Nonprofit categories show a decrease in programming from 2015. This is misleading due to a new category created in 2016 (Colleges, Park District/Teacher Professional Development) and in the past these programs would have fallen under Student/Family or Adult Nonprofit.

Below is the financial summary for total programs including Challenge Course and Team Adventure Camps.

### Financial Summary - Total Programs

		Budgeted	Actual
FY 2015	Net Revenue	\$51,076.63	<b>\$66,995.51</b>
	% Profit	42%	53%
FY 2016	Revenue	\$120,579.00	<b>\$126,968.05</b>
	Wages	\$50,996.69	<b>\$50,976.58</b>
	Contractual	\$3,298.00	<b>\$2,495.01</b>
	Supplies	\$7,240.25	<b>\$6,448.50</b>
	Net Revenue	\$59,044.06	<b>\$67,047.96</b>
	% Profit	49%	53%

Percent Change in Net Revenue: +.08%

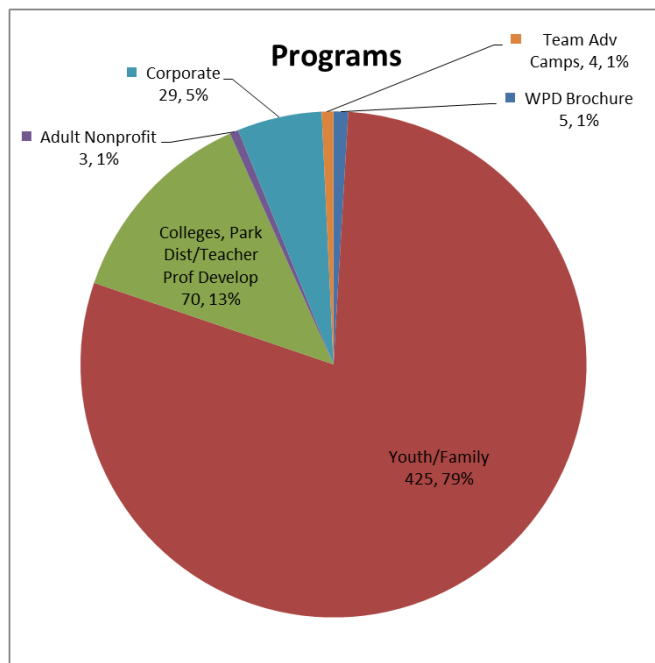
**Green Text** = exceeded revenue/did not exceed expense  
**Red Text** = did not exceed revenue/exceeded expense

**Budget Summary:** Overall net revenue exceeded the budget by 14% or \$8,003.90. This increase can be partially attributed to a 63% increase in revenue for the Colleges, Park District/Teacher Professional Development category from what was budgeted (\$9,759) and what was actual (\$15,924). Since this is a new category, there wasn't any concrete data and the revenue was under budgeted. The net revenue increased by \$52.45 from 2015 (\$66,995.51) to 2016 (\$67,047.96); however, 2015 net revenue includes revenue and expenses from adventure programs no longer in this division which accounted for approximately \$1560 in net revenue for 2015.

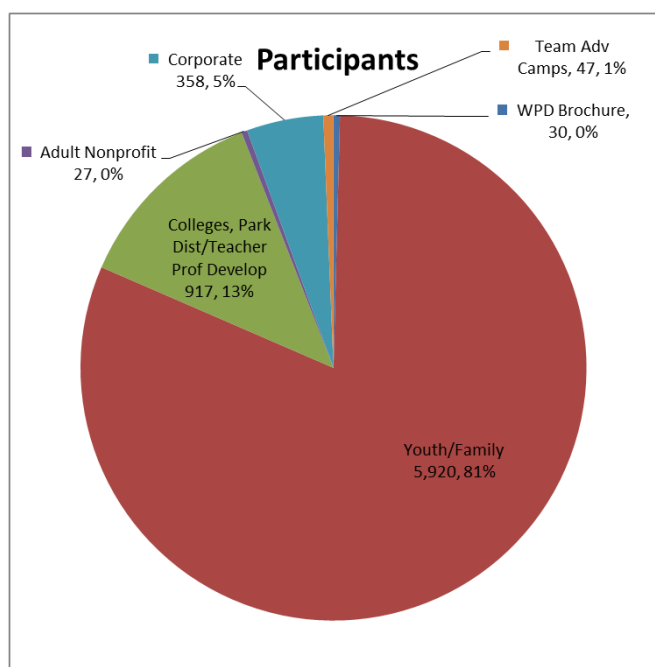




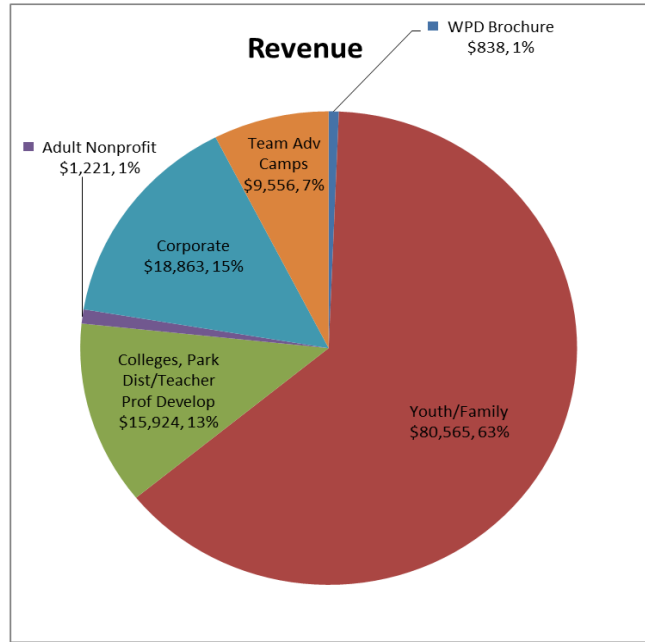
Below are pie charts which illustrate the revenue and number of programs and participants for Brochure, Requested Programs (Youth/Family; Colleges, Park District/Teacher Professional Development; Adult Nonprofit; and Corporate), and Team Adventure Camps.



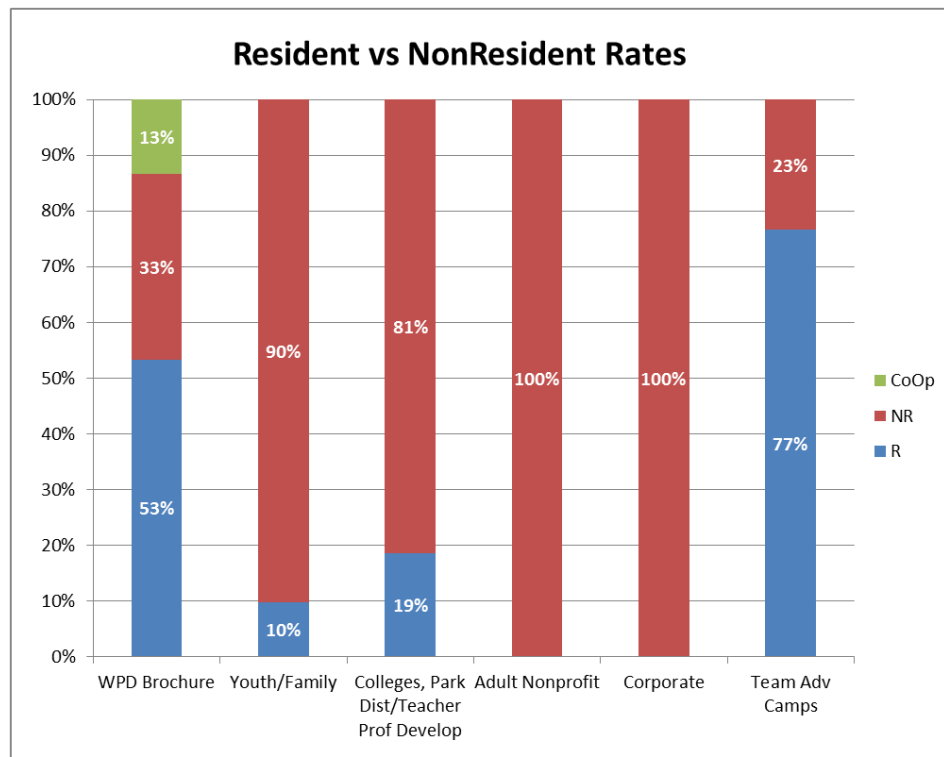
Challenge Course staff presented 536 programs in 2016. Requested Programs accounted for 98%, Brochure Programs 1%, and Team Adventure Camps 1%.



Challenge Course staff presented programs to 7,299 participants in 2016.



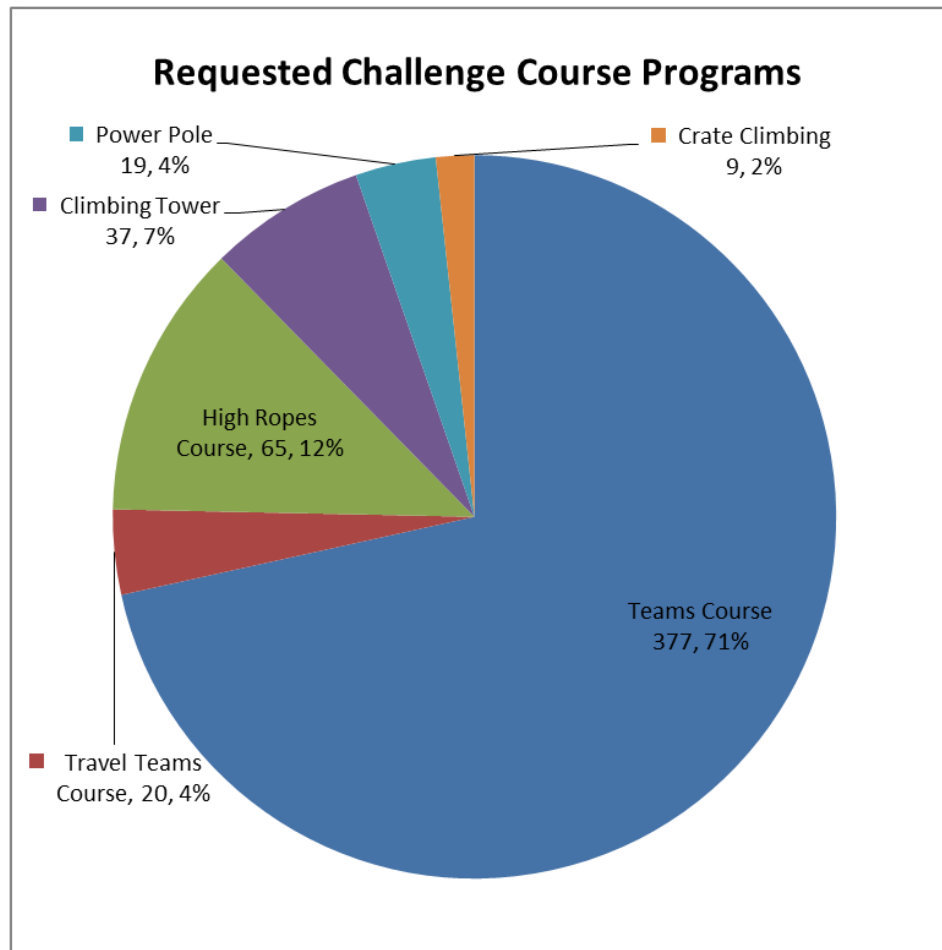
*The Challenge Course division generated \$126,968.05 in revenue in 2016. Requested Programs accounted for 92%, Brochure Programs 1%, and Team Adventure Camps 7% of the total revenue.*



*This graph shows a breakdown of resident and nonresident participants for each program category. Brochure programs are also promoted through our cooperative partnership with the Carol Stream Park District and they have accounted for 13% of the brochure participants.*

## Challenge Course Requested Programs

Groups may request any or a combination of the five types of challenge courses (Teams or Travel Teams, High Ropes, Climbing Tower, Power Pole, and Crate Climbing). Below is a pie chart which shows the percentages and amount for the different types of challenge courses.



*Requested Programs accounted for 527 programs and 71% of those were Teams Course.*

Below is a chart which shows a comparison between the types of programs for each category for 2015 and 2016.

2015					
	Y/F	C/PD/T	ANP	CORP	Total
Teams Course	364	0	12	18	394
Travel Teams Course	15	0	0	2	17
High Ropes Course	51	0	1	6	58
Climbing Tower	20	0	0	1	21
Power Pole	13	0	1	6	20
Crate Climbing	12	0	0	0	12
<b>Total</b>	<b>475</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>522</b>

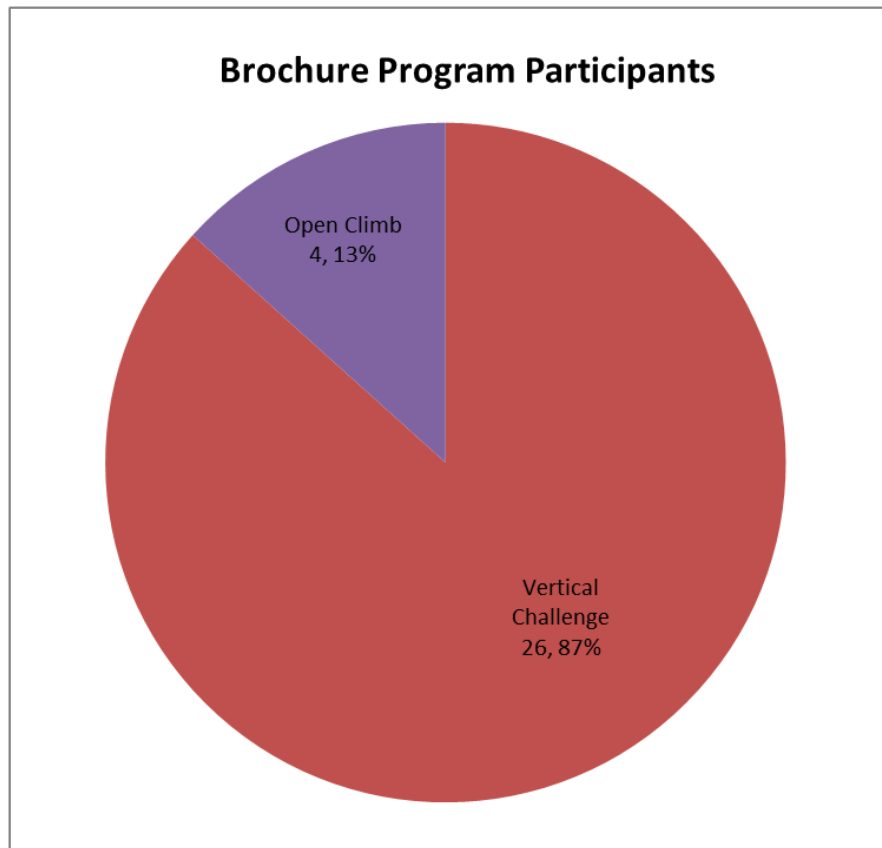
2016					
	Y/F	C/PD/T	ANP	CORP	Total
Teams Course	317	48	1	11	377
Travel Teams Course	4	16	0	0	20
High Ropes Course	49	6	1	9	65
Climbing Tower	37	0	0	0	37
Power Pole	9	0	1	9	19
Crate Climbing	9	0	0	0	9
<b>Total</b>	<b>425</b>	<b>70</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>527</b>

**Summary:** Requested Programs had a 1% increase from 2015 (522) to 2016 (527). This increase is partially attributed to Climbing Tower programs which had a 76% increase due to District 89 which came out over four dates and accounted for 17 Climbing Tower programs. In 2016, we offered a resident rate for Youth/Family programs and had a 282% increase in resident programs from 2015 (11) to 2016(42). The Travel Teams Course had a 18% increase from 2015 (17) to 2016 (20) and the High Ropes Course had a 12% increase from 2015 (58) to 2016 (65) while the other challenge courses had decreases in programming from 2015 to 2016 (Teams Course 4%, Power Pole 5%, and Crate Climbing 25%). The larger decrease in Crate Climbing is due to Da Vinci Academy and Calvin Christian not returning in 2016. This reduced the number of programs from 12 in 2015 to 9 in 2016. Da Vinci Academy didn't return due to the school contact that arranged the Crate Climbing failing to let the school administration know about the field trip and unfortunately were unable to get buses on short notice to travel to the course and Calvin Christian School is in South Holland and it was too far of a distance for them to travel.



## Challenge Course Brochure Programs

These are programs that are offered through the quarterly Wheaton Park District brochure and include Open Climb, Youth Beginner Climbing, Vertical Challenge (High Ropes Course), and Creating a Positive Classroom Environment (Teams Course). Below is a pie chart which illustrates the amounts and percentages of brochure programs.



*Vertical Challenge accounted for 87% of the brochure programs which utilizes the high ropes courses and open climb accounted for 13%. Youth Beginner Climbing and Creating a Positive Classroom Environment didn't run due to low enrollment.*

Below is the financial summary for Challenge Course programs.

**Financial Summary – Challenge Course (6618)**

		Budgeted	Actual
FY 2015	Net Revenue	\$43,251.01	\$61,846.99
	% Profit	43%	54%
FY 2016	Revenue	\$114,034.00	\$117,411.80
	Wages	\$48,063.30	\$48,354.78
	Contractual	\$2,500.00	\$1,298.61
	Supplies	\$7,000.00	\$6,265.52
	Net Revenue	\$56,470.71	\$61,492.89
	% Profit	50%	52%

Percent Change in Net Revenue: -0.6%

**Budget Summary:** There was a 9% increase in net revenue from what was budgeted (\$56,470.71) and actual (\$61,482.87). This increase is partially attributed to under budgeting revenue for the Colleges, Park District/Teacher Professional Development category which increased the hourly rate by 7.6% over the Youth/Family rate which it fell under last year. The increase is also due to adding brochure programs to 6618 which were transitioned into this account in 2016. Wages had a 0.6% increase from budgeted (\$48,063.30) and actual (\$48,354.78) due to increased programming.



## Highlights:

- Exceeded net revenue for the fifth year in a row.
- Fostered a collaborative and supportive environment which improved staff morale and increased program quality.
- Improved overall efficiency with responsibilities through training, delegation, and better planning.
- Improved communication of program details to staff.
- Partnered with Church of the Resurrection to provide an indoor location during inclement weather.
- Developed and implemented an assessment tool to evaluate skills for high elements.
- Created seasonal inspection reports.
- Started planning and preparations to host the 2017 Roundtable Conference to be held at the Church of the Resurrection.
- Successfully implemented District 89 custom program with environmental education over several dates.

## Looking forward:

### *Winter*

- Complete seasonal inspection and teams course preparations.
- E-blast all past participants to remind them about signing up for programs.
- Send out training dates to staff for the upcoming year.
- Submit any work orders for the upcoming year.
- Complete preparations of challenge courses.
- Update all handbooks, prepare waiver files, and update all challenge course binders.
- Schedule ESI Inspection.
- Complete preparations for Roundtable Conference.
- Create an observation checklist for new staff as a follow up after certification.
- Send out high element assessment training times.

### *Spring*

- Send follow-up email to past spring clients.
- Offer Mother's Day Vertical Challenge later in the day since church is held in the morning on Sundays.
- Schedule High Ropes element assessment training in early April.
- Offer two Vertical Challenge programs in May.
- Create a proposal for Recreational Tree Climbing.
- Conduct observations.
- Take pictures of Teams Course activities.
- Make follow-up phone calls to past clients.



### *Summer*

- Conduct an in house seasonal inspection to get the course ready for the fall season.
- Inventory equipment to see if there is any equipment that needs to be purchased for the fall season.
- Complete staffing challenge course for September by August 1<sup>st</sup>.
- Schedule high element assessment in August.
- Schedule ESI for any maintenance concerns and order any supplies to prepare for fall season.
- Conduct observations.
- Order any supplies to prepare for the fall and 2018 season.
- Take pictures of Teams Course activities.



### *Fall*

- Inventory and order any challenge course equipment.
- Start preparing knaack boxes, ropes shed, and garage for winter by mouse proofing as well as cleaning and organizing these areas.
- Prepare and conduct staff evaluations.
- Order any small teambuilding items (blindfolds, throwables, processing tools, etc.).
- Take pictures of Teams Course activities.
- Submit a PR request for a customer appreciation E-blast.
- Implement new training checklist for new staff.



## Team Adventure Camps

In 2016 a total of three themes were offered with one session each of Short Cut and Adventure Edge and two sessions of Adventure Edge 2.

*Short Cut (ages 8-10).* This half day, three day camp offered adventure activities such as team building, geocaching, and wilderness survival.

*Adventure Edge (ages 10-12).* This half day camp offered adventure activities such as team building, geocaching, biking on the Illinois Prairie Path, outdoor skills, and climbing.

*Adventure Edge 2 (ages 12-14).* This camp was from 9am-3pm and offered team building, climbing, horseback riding, creek trekking, recreational tree climbing, ascending up a power pole, and traversing across a high ropes course.



The following charts show which specific Team Adventure Camps ran and the revenue from each camp as well as the enrollment per month from 2015 to 2016.

Team Adventure Camps			
Program Title	Programs	Participants	Total Fees
Short Cut	1	12	\$1,000.00
Adventure Edge	1	11	\$1,406.25
Adventure Edge 2	2	24	\$7,150.00
<b>Total</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>47</b>	<b>\$9,556.25</b>

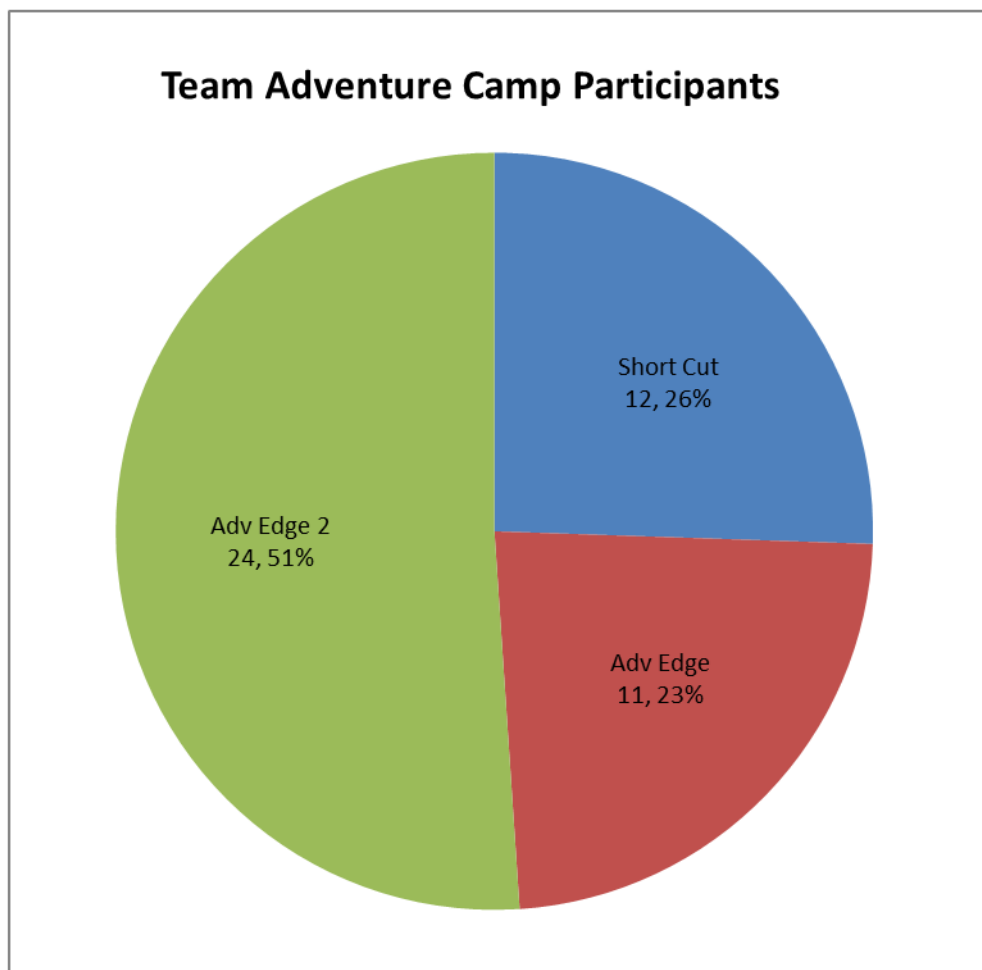
Month	FY 2015		FY 2016			
	Programs	Participants	Programs	Participants	Cancellations	Can. Rate
June	2	14	2	24	0	0%
July	1	13	2	23	1	33%
August	1	9	0	0	0	-
<b>Total</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>47</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>20%</b>

**Analysis:** There were four camps that ran in 2015 and 2016 and there was a 31% increase in the number of participants from 2015 (36) to 2016 (47).

*Short Cut* accounted for 10% of the revenue and had an increase in enrollment from 2015 (9 participants) to 2016 (12 participants).

*Adventure Edge* accounted for 15% of the revenue and had decreases in enrollment from 2015 (14 participants) to 2016 (11 participants).

*Adventure Edge 2* accounted for 75% of the revenue and increased in enrollment from 2015 (13 participants) to 2016 (24 participants).





### Financial Summary – Team Adventure Camps (6635)

		Budgeted	Actual
FY 2015	Net Revenue	\$3,565.25	\$3,076.43
	% Profit	36%	49%
FY 2016	Revenue	\$6,545.00	\$9,556.25
	Wages	\$2,933.40	\$2,621.80
	Contractual	\$798.00	\$1,196.40
	Supplies	\$240.35	\$182.98
	Net Revenue	\$2,573.35	\$5,555.07
	% Profit	52%	58%

*Percent Change in Net Revenue: 81%*

**Budget Summary:** Team Adventure Camps net revenue has increased by 81% from 2015 (\$3,076.43) to 2016 (\$5,555.07). This increase is mainly attributed to Adventure Edge 2 which accounted for 75% of the revenue (\$7,150). Wages had an 11% decrease from budget (\$2,933.40) and actual (\$2,621.80) due to the Challenge Course Supervisor filling in for camp staff more frequently than anticipated. The contractual expenses were increased by 50 percent from budgeted (\$798) to actual (\$1,196.40) due to an increase in participants anticipated (15) and actual (24) for Adventure Edge 2 camp.

#### Highlights:

- Successfully added a cookout to Adventure Edge 2 camp.
- A large increase in participation of 31% and in revenue of 51%.
- Camp outlines and parent schedules were updated and rewritten.
- Feedback from the parents and campers was positive.
- Successfully incorporated Church of the Resurrection into the camp as an alternative backup indoor space.
- Camp staff did a great job leading the camps.

#### Looking Forward:

- Purchase a dip net for wilderness survival.
- Reach out to 2016 camp staff in January about returning in 2017.
- Schedule only four sessions of Team Adventure Camp in 2017 for the following dates:
  - June 19-23: Adventure Edge
  - June 26-30: Adventure Edge 2
  - July 5-7: Short Cut
  - July 17-21: Adventure Edge 2
- Post camp pictures on Facebook daily.
- Look into a phone message recording that can be sent to all camp parents at the same time with camp reminders.
- Offer Short Cut again for 8-10 year olds.

**Below are the 2016 Goals that were accomplished by the Challenge Course Division that connect to the Wheaton Park District Values.**

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***Integrity***

- Created new requirements for challenge course certification and assessed staff on various high element technical skills.
- Created seasonal inspection reports with a list of items that need to be checked monthly.

***Fun***

- Created routes with fun names that were laminated and posted on inside of climbing tower door.
- Added animal climbing holds to climbing tower.

***Adaptability & Growth***

- Researched the possibility of hosting the 16<sup>th</sup> Annual Roundtable conference and will be hosting the roundtable in March of 2017.
- Researched the possibility of reserving indoor space from Church of the Resurrection for programs and workshops. In 2016, began a partnership with them to use their space in return for challenge course programs.
- Attended the IPRA Conference.

***Commitment***

- Renewed ACCT Challenge Course Managers Certification.

***Kindness***

- Incorporated speakers into staff meetings on topics such as students with special needs or youth at risk.
- Offered a “Colors” personality test to staff to attain a better understanding of how to work with each other.

***Service***

- Assessed and replaced or added new initiatives, equipment, or activities that will provide a better experience for our clients. Added a spider web and an A-frame activity to the Teams Course.

**Below are the 2017 Goals for the Challenge Course Division that connect to the Wheaton Park District Values.**

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***Integrity***

- Complete an end of the year inventory. Retire any equipment that needs to be retired due to wear and tear or getting close to manufacturer’s expiration date by cutting into pieces or recycling any equipment made from aluminum.
- Research possibility of installing another Nitro Crossing since it is a popular activity by replacing small processing pit by group wall with Nitro Crossing.

### *Fun*

- Research and create a proposal for recreational tree climbing in 2018.
- Research possibility of offering Giant's Ladder as an add on to any challenge course.

### *Adaptability & Growth*

- Complete preparations for hosting 17<sup>th</sup> Annual Roundtable Conference
- Research the possibility of recruiting students from Wheaton College Honeyrock to facilitate.
- Develop a co-op program with the Winfield Park District and others to offer brochure programs.
- Attend a training and/or workshop to improve my understanding of how to utilize social media.

### *Commitment*

- Attend the ACCT Conference.
- Join the safety committee.

### *Kindness*

- Create an observation checklist for new staff as a follow up after their certification to be completed during observations.
- Create a binder with pictures of putting on equipment and transfers from element to element on the high ropes course to provide a more visual representation for people with special needs such as Autism to help them process these protocols.
- Provide a shared virtual space for staff where they could have access to articles pertaining to challenge course facilitation, calendars, and workshop and conference information.

### *Service*

- Post element name and level of difficulty for each high ropes activity and for various challenges for each activity so participants can make an informed decision regarding which element they would like to do.
- Create large arrows that can be velcroed on the course at transfer spots to manage the flow of the course and to reduce multiple partnerships waiting on platforms for a transfer.
- Increase understanding of Facebook to post camp pictures and share information about camp.
- Research possibility of an automated message to camp parents including important information about camp.