Girls enjoy the Summer Night Lights program at Nickerson Gardens Housing Development. (Photo by Juan Posada, courtesy of the City of Los Angeles)
The Summer Youth Fund is a charitable fund at the California Community Foundation (CCF) that makes summer educational and recreational activities available to low-income and at-risk youth in many of the most disadvantaged communities of Los Angeles County.

The fund was created in 2009 in response to a significant reduction in summer programs for local youth due to cutbacks in public funding.

In 2010, local kids faced similar challenges. Public pools were closed, community programs were cut, library hours were reduced, summer schools were shut, jobs were harder to come by, and family finances were stretched painfully thin. A lack of positive recreational opportunities during the hot summer months for low-income and at-risk youth creates an environment of frustration, tension and, all too frequently, crime and violence.

To address this serious and immediate situation, CCF supported two outstanding programs: Summer Night Lights by the City of Los Angeles and the YMCA of Metropolitan Los Angeles.

Thanks to contributions from generous donors like you, we helped thousands of children and youth enjoy Summer 2010.
What It Is

The Y Summer Youth Fund of the YMCA of Metropolitan Los Angeles provides scholarships to youth and adults in low-income households throughout Los Angeles County so they may enjoy membership privileges and program activities at local YMCA branches.

The Y Summer Youth Fund programs are designed to:
- Prevent the “summer slide” in which students’ academic competency levels fall back due to lack of mental stimulation and personal development
- Improve youth’s health through physical activity and nutrition education
- Support youth’s social development, which is closely connected to academic attainment and self-esteem

The Summer Youth Fund of the California Community Foundation provided $88,250 to the Y Summer Youth Fund in 2010 so that nearly 1,000 individuals of all ages and backgrounds could enjoy the benefits of a variety of YMCA programs and facilities.

How It Works

Y Day Camp: Kids and families enjoyed long summer days filled with academic, cultural, physical and social activities at urban YMCA branches with Y Day Camps. Active Kids Week offered sports, fitness, dance, acting, arts and crafts, and healthy cooking classes. Active Family Weeks provided opportunities for moms, dads and kids to interact, relax and learn together.

Resident Camp: After not being available in the East Los Angeles community for several years due to lack of funding, YMCA Camp Whittle in the San Bernardino National Forest hosted disadvantaged youth from this and many other inner-city areas for a week-long summer camping trip. The kids experienced nature in the great outdoors and participated in activities that included horseback riding, canoeing, archery, rope courses and hiking — for the first time in their lives.

Teen Memberships: Youth received teen memberships to the South Los Angeles YMCA branch and became part of the College Club, which helped prepare them to take college entrance exams, research colleges and fill out admission paperwork.

Family Memberships: To help families that are struggling to make ends meet and stay healthy, the CCF Summer Youth Fund provided family memberships at several urban Y centers.

Results

- Antidote to Summer Slide
  The Y was able to open its doors to nearly 1,000 more youth than it would have served, including 229 kids that were able to attend a full week of summer enrichment programming for free.

- Health and Wellness
  Nearly 300 kids at high risk of obesity and diabetes were able to play and exercise in safe and friendly YMCAs.
SUMMER NIGHT LIGHTS (SNL)
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Results

• Safer, Friendlier Communities
SNL in 2010 contributed to major reductions in gang-related crime over the same period the previous summer, including a 57 percent reduction in homicides and a 48 percent reduction in aggravated assaults, according to the LAPD as reported by the Los Angeles Times (October 31, 2010).

• Job Training and Positive Work Experiences
About 240 unskilled youth who might otherwise have been unemployed for weeks or months received valuable training and experience that made them better prepared for regular, full-time employment.

• Alternatives to Gang Participation
Tens of thousands of youth, many of whom are often reluctant to participate in sports and organized activities at home or in their neighborhoods, engaged in physical activities and arts workshops that were social, safe, fun and free.

• Greater Opportunities for Women
More young women participated in the program than in previous years, largely because SNL focused on engaging this group in new ways. For example, basketball clinics for girls hosted by the Los Angeles Sparks were a big hit.

• Community Pride
Participants and parents expressed pride and appreciation for SNL. What’s more, at SNL’s annual end-of-summer grand finale, SNL brought together youth from the 24 sites — across gang lines — without a single incident of violence or disturbance.

Comment from a Participant
“It was keeping a lot of the little kids active… Lots of them do bad stuff like fighting and stealing, but not during Summer Night Lights. The kids couldn’t wait for the next day.”

Y SUMMER YOUTH FUND
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• New Life Experiences Outside of the City
Through scholarships, 95 campers from the East L.A. service area and 44 campers from other local Y branches had their first chance to be away from home and camp outdoors.

• Family Fun and Fitness
Nearly 400 family members accessed facilities, equipment and programs at four Y branches for the first time, for days and weeks, and free of charge.

“The teen center has helped me by boosting my self-esteem. My mom is also happy because I text less and I interact with people personally now. I also enjoy working out with my friends, going to the pool and playing sports.”

– Dolores, age 13

The California Community Foundation (CCF) is a public, charitable organization serving Los Angeles County since 1915, and playing several roles in the community today. It manages more than 1,600 funds created by individuals, families, companies and organizations, and serves as a steward of their funds and legacies. It makes grants to nonprofits working with low-income and underserved L.A. communities, and actively engages in community problem solving with business, civic, government and other organizations. For more information, visit calfund.org.

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