Summer evokes memories of carefree days, camping trips and playing with friends at the local pool. But for many low-income families, it can be a dangerous time. Summer schools and public pools face closure. Day camps and vacations are often unaffordable for families struggling to make ends meet. Without supervision and positive, structured activities, children face boredom and frustration that can lead to destructive behaviors.

Last year, California Community Foundation donors gave over $110,000 to the Summer Youth Fund, which provides outstanding enrichment programs for thousands of children, youth and families after the last school bell rings. Launched in 2009, the Summer Youth Fund has raised over $500,000, and, with CCF’s matching support, granted nearly $800,000 to two of L.A.’s most effective organizations: the City of Los Angeles’ Summer Night Lights program and the YMCA of Metropolitan Los Angeles. Both enabled at-risk L.A. youth and families to take part in educational, recreational, artistic and athletic programs, enjoying a safe and productive summer while making memories that will last a lifetime.

In this impact report, you will learn about all the ways that California Community Foundation donors helped to create positive experiences for vulnerable children and families in 2013. And, as we come to the end of another school year, we hope you will help change the lives of those in need in the summer of 2014.

Transforming Summer for Thousands of L.A. Youth

Your Impact

Fundraising Goal: $100,000
Total Contributions: $110,452
Nickerson Gardens Summer Night Lights Program Participants: 25,535
Meals Served to Nickerson Gardens Community Members: 15,959
Youth Scholarships to YMCA Resident Camps: 233
Total YMCA Family Memberships and Camp Scholarships: 975

Support a Safer Summer in 2014

We invite you to support the 2014 Summer Youth Fund by making a contribution to allow our city’s youth to experience a positive and safe summer. For more information or to schedule a site visit this summer, please contact Tammy Johnson at tjohnson@calfund.org or (213) 413-4130. Please visit the Summer Youth Fund web page at calfund.org/syf.
YMCA OF METROPOLITAN LOS ANGELES

Lifelong Lessons, Values and Friendships

In the summer, working parents are often forced to leave their children without structured supervision. The YMCA of Metropolitan Los Angeles, with $55,226 in support from California Community Foundation’s Summer Youth Fund, provided 975 children and families with positive, structured summer experiences designed to build strong minds, healthy bodies and good character.

These included a day camp program that gave kids the opportunity to connect, explore and have fun with a curriculum built over nine weeks. Campers studied American history, played team sports, learned the steps needed to go to college and build a career, played instruments, sang, danced and swam. Most importantly, they built friendships and memories that will last long after the summer of 2013.

Strengthening Southeast L.A. Families

Support was targeted at areas with the greatest need: the Weingart East Los Angeles YMCA in Boyle Heights, the Weingart YMCA Wellness and Aquatic Center in South Los Angeles and the new Southeast-Rio Vista Y in Maywood. Launched with a $128,000 grant from the California Community Foundation, the Southeast-Rio Vista Y brought sorely needed health, fitness, education and youth development programming to serve families across Southeast L.A. It opened in its new space in May, just in time for summer, and saw 1,200 new members in the first two weeks. By the time school let out, the new Y was able to provide a wide array of programs for the whole family, from aerobics classes to the Youth & Government leadership development program, to thousands of families across Southeast L.A.

Resident Camp

Thanks to the Summer Youth Fund, 233 low-income youth experienced resident camp at the Y’s Camp Whittle in Big Bear. Campers discovered the wonders of the natural world, developing values like caring, respect, honesty and responsibility. While camp may only last a week, campers can take the self-esteem, confidence and responsibility they develop with them as they travel down the mountain and back into their lives.

Mad About Learning

Destiny, 12, first came to the Weingart East Los Angeles Y when the Summer Youth Fund offered her family a membership. Her mother was excited to enjoy the Y’s healthy activities programs, taking classes in spinning and aerobics. Destiny, on the other hand, wanted to be a mad scientist.

At the Mad Science day camp, kids spend a full week performing wild and exciting experiments. Destiny learned how science affects the world around her, from the tiniest atom to the biggest star.

Now back in school, Destiny has taken a new interest in her science classes. Her participation in Y day camps helped her become more outgoing as well, allowing this budding mad scientist to make new friends and become more engaged with her school community.
Parks are the setting of so many summer rituals, from cookouts, to carnivals, to baseball games. A $55,226 grant from the Summer Youth Fund allowed residents of Nickerson Gardens, a Watts housing development impacted by gang activity, to take back their park and create a safer summer in 2013 through City of Los Angeles' Summer Night Lights program (SNL).

Launched in 2008, SNL extends hours at 32 parks, reducing gang violence and providing fun and educational activities, sports leagues and summer jobs. In 2013, Summer Youth Fund donors helped SNL contribute to a reduction in gang-related crime of almost 35 percent city-wide and create uplifting summer programs for 25,535 youth, families and community members in Nickerson Gardens.

These results impressed incoming mayor Eric Garcetti, who authorized an additional three weeks of programming. “As mayor, I decided to extend this year’s programs because the numbers show it works in reducing crime in the communities most affected by gang crime,” Garcetti said.

SNL’s greatest success, though, is the way it has brought the people of Nickerson Gardens together. By creating jobs and providing healthy and educational programming, from art workshops to Zumba classes, it has created a safe space for neighborhood children and families to learn and play. As one resident put it, “This is the best way to get my whole family together for free. I can let the kids play and relax with my friends. Who wouldn’t come every year?”

Children play safely in Nickerson Gardens, thanks to Summer Night Lights. (Courtesy of Summer Night Lights)

“SNL not only made me feel comfortable to go to my neighborhood park – it also made me feel like a part of my community.”
– Summer Night Lights Participant

Summer Jobs Build Skills for Life

A summer job can help a young person earn more than just money. Responsibility, self-respect and leadership skills are just a few of the qualities developed by participants in the SNL Youth Squad.

Comprised of local neighborhood youth aged 17-24, the Youth Squad helps staff programming at all 32 SNL sites. In 2013, it employed 1,097 young people, giving many their first opportunity for employment.

Members also received training in work readiness, customer service, community outreach and financial literacy, ensuring that they have the skills to succeed, long after the summer ends.

Youth Squad members on the job at the Nickerson Gardens SNL program. (Courtesy of Summer Night Lights)
Summer Youth Fund:
Building Brighter Futures for L.A. Families

Nights of games in the park or days at the pool create more than just summer fun. They bring families and communities together with safe, healthy and free activities. They build skills, values and habits that will continue with children for the rest of their lives. Ian and his mother, Cassandra, exemplify the Summer Youth Fund’s impact. On the borderline for childhood obesity, Ian’s ability to make friends suffered as much as his health. The Y membership that he and his mother received through the Summer Youth Fund meant a summer of soccer, karate and swimming that lowered Ian’s BMI from the danger zone and gave him the confidence to come out of his shell. Meanwhile, YMCA wellness classes helped bring Cassandra’s Type 2 diabetes completely under control.

Summer Youth Fund and the California Community Foundation funded member benefits to 376 people in 2013, and helped over 4,000 residents of Southeast L.A. improve their minds and bodies through the Southeast-Rio Vista YMCA.

Under the lights of Nickerson Gardens, Youth Squad members learned the satisfaction that comes with hard work, serving 15,959 healthy meals to neighborhood families and children. "I like that Summer Night Lights helps me give back to my community," a Youth Squad member said. Kristi, also a Youth Squad member, sees the program as a way to change more than just her own future. “My whole life, my whole family was part of the gang. I’m trying to set a new example for my nieces and nephews.” Thanks to Summer Youth Fund donors, young people like Kristi and Ian, hard-working parents like Cassandra and even budding mad scientists like Destiny were able to discover something new about themselves – new talents, new dreams and new futures – and make 2013 a summer to remember.

"Every day there is a new challenge. You see other people face that challenge, and you see them achieve new things. The smile that comes from that achievement - it means the world. That's what I love about camp!"

– Lawrence, Age 15