BENEFITS OF SKATEPARKS

“Skateparks encourage youth to develop healthy, active lifestyles. Research shows that skateboarding and the communities that form at skateparks help young people build connections that benefit their socioemotional wellbeing. Skateparks are also havens of diversity, where youth of all backgrounds gather and connect through their common love of the sport.” - Tony Hawk

FACTS AND FIGURES

Skateparks can be a part of the solution for a happier and healthier community. Take this information and apply it to your project’s community awareness campaign.

A skatepark is a safe place for individuals and groups to challenge themselves, to encourage and be encouraged, to set and achieve their own goals while learning to manage risk along the way. It’s a place where people build healthy habits like self-directed exercise and creative expression. It’s a place where people learn how to persevere and the value of persistence. A place to experience accomplishment and build confidence. A skatepark is an attractive, accessible and safe recreational facility for all. A community gathering space for skaters, families and the entire community.

The benefits of skateparks are becoming more clear as research shows the physical and socioemotional benefits of the activity and the space.

DEMAND

Skateboarding is the third most commonly reported interest for high school students (24% of girls, and 17% of boys). (Aspen Institute National Student Survey Analysis 2021)

There are 8.8 million skateboarders in the US. Up 34% from 2019. This does not account for the many other skatepark users: BMX riders, roller/quad skaters, inline skaters, Wheelchair Motocross riders (WCMX), scooter riders and more. (Sports & Fitness Industry Association 2021 Single Sport Report on Skateboarding)

The Skatepark Project has seen a 700% increase in skatepark project support requests from advocates and municipalities since the inclusion of Skateboarding and freestyle BMX in the Olympic Games. (skatepark.org) Skateparks are the fourth most used recreation space in terms of total weekly use hours. They were found to be more popular than sports fields, play areas, fitness zones and dog parks when comparing the total weekly use hours. (The First National Study on Neighborhood Parks - Implications of Physical Activity)

Covid-19 has unleashed and amplified a number of simultaneous personal, social, medical, political, and economic crises. (Young People Hit Hardest By Loneliness And Depression During Covid-19)
Mental Health

**ISSUE:**
The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP), American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry (AACAP) and Children’s Hospital Association have declared a national emergency in children’s mental health, citing the serious toll of the COVID-19 pandemic on top of existing challenges.

The Centers for Disease Control found between March and October 2020, emergency department visits for mental health emergencies rose by 24% for children ages 5-11 years and 31% for children ages 12-17 years. In addition, emergency department visits for suspected suicide attempts increased nearly 51% among girls ages 12-17 years in early 2021 compared to the same period in 2019. (Centers for Disease Control)

Suicide affects all ages. It is the second leading cause of death for people ages 10-34, the fourth leading cause among people ages 35-54. (Centers for Disease Control)

There were an estimated 100,306 drug overdose deaths in the United States during a 12-month period ending in April 2021, an increase of 28.5% from the 78,056 overdose-related deaths during the same period the year before. (CDC’s National Center for Health Statistics)

The top three outcomes that parents want from youth sports are “Fun,” “Positive Peer Relationships” and “Social and Emotional Skills.” (Aspen Institute/Utah State University National Youth Sports Parent Survey)

**IMPACT:**
**Skateboarding improves mental health.** A recent study from The Skatepark Project and USC revealed that 76% of people skate to have fun, and 62% skate to get away from stress. (University of Southern California - Beyond The Board Study)

**Skateboarding encourages resilience.** The nature of skateboarding requires skaters to learn on their own and develop their own strategies to succeed. Skaters frequently perform a trick hundreds of times over long periods before developing proficiency or experiencing reward for the efforts. Skaters in the study reported that they apply these lessons of resilience to their lives outside of skateboarding. (University of Southern California - Beyond The Board Study)

**Exercise reduces symptoms** of anxiety and depression, improves mood, and promotes general feelings of well-being. (Centers for Disease Control)

**Physical activity improves mental health.** Researchers found that, on average, a person has 3.4 poor mental health days per month. But among those who exercise, the number of poor mental health days dropped by more than 40 percent. (Association between physical exercise and mental health in 1·2 million individuals in the USA between 2011 and 2015: a cross-sectional study)

**Physical activity improves mental health.** Numerous studies, cited by the Office of the U.S. Surgeon General, have shown a direct link between increases in physical activity and a reduction in the occurrence of chronic diseases such as high blood pressure, diabetes, congestive heart failure, and stroke. (Centers for Disease Control)

**Exercise reduces the risk of dying from coronary heart disease and of developing high blood pressure, colon cancer, and diabetes.** (Centers for Disease Control)

**Social support from family and friends has been consistently and positively related to regular physical activity.** (Centers for Disease Control)

Physical

**ISSUE:**
The average child today spends less than three years playing a sport, quitting by age 11. (Aspen Institute’s National Youth Sports Survey)

Over the past three decades, childhood obesity rates have tripled in the U.S., and today, the country has some of the highest obesity rates in the world: one out of six children is obese, and one out of three children is overweight or obese. (Harvard School of Public Health)

Nearly 40% of American adults aged 20 and over are obese. 71.6% of adults aged 20 and over are overweight, including obesity. (National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey, 2017-2018; Harvard School of Public Health, 2020).

On average, American children spend only 4-7 minutes a day engaging in free unstructured play.

**IMPACT:**
**Youth and adults get their CDC recommended daily cardiovascular exercise while skateboarding at skateparks.** - CSUSM Studies in the International Journal of Exercise Science. (Cal-State University San Marcos Skateboarding Cardio Study: Adult, Cal-State University San Marcos Skateboarding Cardio Study: Youth)

**Numerous studies, cited by the Office of the U.S. Surgeon General, have shown a direct link between increases in physical activity and a reduction in the occurrence of chronic diseases such as high blood pressure, diabetes, congestive heart failure, and stroke.** (Centers for Disease Control)

**Exercise reduces the risk of dying from coronary heart disease and of developing high blood pressure, colon cancer, and diabetes.** (Centers for Disease Control)

**Social support from family and friends has been consistently and positively related to regular physical activity.** (Centers for Disease Control)
SOCIAL

ISSUE:

Americans were the most likely to say their society was split along partisan, racial and ethnic lines. (Diversity and Division in Advanced Economies, 2021, Pew Research Center)

A meta-analysis of 148 studies indicated that those with stronger social ties have a 50% increased likelihood of survival. This finding remained consistent across age, sex, initial health status, cause of death, and follow-up period. (Social relationships and mortality risk: a meta-analytic review)

Research shows that fewer African-American children play sports than White children, who in turn have greater access to the benefits of sports. (Race and Sport - Women’s Sports Foundation)

Historical institutional disadvantages, societal stereotyping and economic inequalities present challenges to sports participation. These challenges often result in the underrepresentation of people of color in sports that are more costly to participate in or which require access to facilities that are not located within easy reach of lower socio-economic populations. (Race and Sport - Women’s Sports Foundation)

IMPACT:

Skateboarding and skateparks facilitate a sense of community among skaters — Skateboarders reported the value of connecting with people who share similar passions in skateparks, skate shops, and at skating events. Those encounters often facilitate intercultural communication and offer skaters the opportunity to interact with, and gain an increased understanding of, skaters of diverse racial, age and gender backgrounds. (University of Southern California - Beyond The Board Study)

Gender and race matter – The study also showed that skaters of color felt a greater degree of safety from judgment within the skateboarding community than in nonskate contexts. Female skaters indicated they believe they are judged by their gender both in and out of skateboarding contexts. (University of Southern California - Beyond The Board Study)

“Skateboarding is a pro-social activity that provides an opportunity for relationship building both non-verbally and verbally. A skateboard affords the kids an opportunity to teach and learn from each other, as well as to learn skateboard etiquette which then helps with socialization.” (Dr. Emily Wang, Ph.D., R. Psych. Hull Services, Calgary)

“Our research shows that through skateboarding, skaters develop the ability to communicate and build relationships with people from diverse backgrounds. Skaters are excellent critical thinkers and problem-solvers who view success from a more communal perspective.” (Dr. Neftalie Williams, University of Southern California)

ACCESSIBILITY

ISSUE:

The biggest predictor of sport participation is the parents’ income. Kids from lower income homes participate in sports less often. Only 27.5 percent of children from homes with incomes under $25,000 a year play sports compared to the 45.5 percent of kids from homes with incomes greater than $100,000 a year. (Aspen Institute)

IMPACT:

Skateboarding is the third least expensive sport (out of 21 of the most popular sports, annual average spending on one child, behind only track and field and flag football). (Aspen Institute/Utah State University 2019 National Youth Sports Survey (1,032 youth sport parents)

A 2011 study found a positive link between the overall population’s physical activity and the supply of sports facilities within a major city. (European Review of Aging and Physical Activity)
through our work, we solidly confirmed that skateboarding and skateparks provide young folks an opportunity and space to express themselves, socialize & create community - all of which supports their mental health and their overall wellbeing.”

- Councilwoman Dr. Maria Morales, USC Study: Beyond the Board

“Skateparks are so important for the community. It’s something positive the kids can do growing up. That’s the biggest thing - skating teaches you persistence, it teaches you confidence. It gives you confidence and so many life lessons as a kid.”

- Jagger Eaton, Professional Skateboarder and Olympic Medalist, Team USA

“Skateboarding allows you the freedom to explore the limits of your courage and creativity. It is simultaneously an individual pursuit and community activity. Each skater is focused on their own goals while contributing to and engaging with a global community.”

- Amelia Brodka, Olympian, Activist and Professional Skateboarder

“Physically and mentally, it feels very freeing. There’s so much room for individual expression and creativity.”

- Dr. Paul Field

“One of the great activities is skateboarding. To learn to do a skateboard trick - how many times you’ve got to get something wrong before you get it right... you learn to do that trick, now you’ve got a life lesson. Whenever I see those skateboard kids, I think, ‘those skateboard kids will be alright.”

- Jerry Seinfeld, Comedian and Social Observer

“Skateboarding today attracts all kinds of demographics, from children to middle-aged individuals and across a gender spectrum that incorporates men, women, non-binary and gender diverse populations. Once associated with the USA and the West, newer skate scenes are emerging from as far apart as Palestine to Cuba. Skateboarding also has a broad social reach, from its subcultural origins to now being an Olympic sport. Yet unlike traditional organized sports, it remains a creative practice, and is adaptive rather than anchored to static rules. As such, skateboarding can provide innovative and fresh insights into creating safe, inclusive and sustainable public/common spaces that are vibrant, multigenerational, socially diverse and physically and culturally engaging.”

- Dr. Indigo Willing, Sociologist

“It’s very good for kids. It’s a good way to get them outside and exercising. Skateboarding has taught me to never give up and have fun. Any skatepark I go to I make new friends.”

- Sky Brown, Olympian and Professional Skateboarder

“As a teenager in America, at the time skating was what you did, that was how you bonded with your friends and did something creative. Communities were created.”

- Virgil Abloh, Fashion Designer, Entrepreneur, Skateboarder

“Skateboarding’s been my safe place. It’s really the only place I could be me, officially. So being able to have a skatepark nearby - 20, 30 minutes - is such a game changer because everyone is able to be connected, have a place to be safe, not worry about their outside lives and just be able to have a nice time. The community that you build and the family I’ve built... I wasn’t one of the blessed ones to have a good family given to me so I got to create one with skating and that’s been a game changer for me.”

- Alana Smith, Professional Skateboarder and Olympian
SUPPORT FROM THE SKATEPARK PROJECT

Founded by Tony Hawk, The Skatepark Project (TSP) is a nonprofit organization working to increase access to outdoor recreation and free play through the creation of safe and inclusive community skateparks. TSP provides the resources, advocacy skills, grants and fellowship programs that guide skaters in creating their own community skateparks, from conception through construction. This is a collaborative process between skaters and city authorities to invest in capital improvements that will enrich a community for decades. The Skatepark Project’s grant programs have awarded over $10 million to help fund nearly 700 public skateparks in all 50 states, enjoyed by an estimated six million people annually. The organization’s International Program has provided technical and financial support to assist youth through the Skateistan educational programs in Afghanistan, Cambodia, and South Africa. To get involved, visit www.skatepark.org

OTHER DOWNLOADS FROM TSP
MOBILE APP
INSTRUCTIONAL VIDEOS
SIGNATURE ELEMENTS
DIY CDS
GREEN SKATEPARKS
SUPPORT FROM SKATEISTAN AND GOOD PUSH
GOODPUSH TOOLKIT

GRANT FUNDING
Over 600 granted parks open in the United States.
LEARN MORE

FEEDBACK SURVEY