Breaking Bread and Celebrating – secrets to successful partnerships

Amy Lethbridge, Deputy Executive Director, MRCA
Jamie Cabral, Chief of Interpretation, MRCA
Mayisha Akbar, Executive Director, Compton Jr Posse
Goals of Community Partner Program

• Develop meaningful, long term relationships with community organizations in targeted communities;

• Serve non traditional park users with traditional park programs that are adapted to the special needs and concerns of the community;

• Support partner programs with resources, expertise and opportunities; and

• Joint creation of follow up programs and opportunities beyond initial programming.
MRCA Junior Ranger Programs

- 12 Sessions
- Skill based
- Community Service Day
- Career Day
- Camping Trip
- Graduation/Swearing in
2 Case Studies
Anahuak Youth Sports

2000+ families
Cypress Park and East Los Angeles
Junior Ranger Programs organized around team structure and leadership
Family days in the mountains and the beach
Camping Skills for families
Community Thanksgiving
Compton Junior Posse

Keeping kids off the streets and on horses in the most dangerous city in America.
CJP Junior Ranger
Outdoor Leaders

Paid internships

- 16 hours a month
- Leadership role with new Junior Rangers
- Program Development
- Outreach and Recruitment
- Speaking engagements
Benefits to the Partners

- Assistance with capacity building;
- Increased program offerings;
- Organizational esteem and pride;
- In kind support, introductions advocacy; and
- Opportunities for members/participants.
Benefits to the MRCA

- An MRCA representative to the community, from the community;
- Local logistics handled at local level;
- Participant recruitment;
- Educating/troubleshooting on cultural competencies; and
- Advocacy of park issues/programs.
Elements of partnership

- Involvement from the beginning
  - Start with an idea not a program
- Common vision/goal
  - We need x, what do you need?
- Open communication/feedback
- Honesty/Trust
- Consensus/Compromise
- Clear expectations
- Follow through
- Equal responsibility
Important Ingredients

• Food – breaking bread is a universal;
• Celebrations – honor participation, make them feel important; (They are!)
• Go to their events!;
• Flexibility;
• No templates or cookie cutters;
• Use community leaders, formal or informal to represent you;
• Treat them as “part of the family”;
• Little things matter;
• Have fun together;
• Do not have meetings only at your office/park;
• Do not always have your uniform on; and
• Remember a community is not homogenous.
Universal Park traditions
New Partners

• Venice Boys and Girls Club at the Ballona Wetlands
• Para Los Ninos at Vista Hermosa Natural Park
• Mar Vista Gardens Housing Project
• Boys and Girls Club of Oxnard
Community Ambassadors