



COUNTY OF LOS ANGELES
DEPARTMENT OF PARKS AND RECREATION

"Parks Make Life Better!"

John Wicker, Director

Norma E. Garcia, Chief Deputy Director

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**PARKS AFTER DARK PROGRAM KICKS OFF SUMMER SEASON JUNE 15 WITH
EXTENDED EVENING HOURS AND RECREATIONAL ACTIVITIES FOR THE
WHOLE FAMILY AT 23 COUNTY PARKS IN UNDERSERVED COMMUNITIES**

LOS ANGELES COUNTY – The 2017 Parks After Dark (PAD) program kicks off the season on June 15 at 23 county parks, with numerous free programs and events for the entire family to enjoy during balmy summer evenings.

PAD encourages healthy living, promotes social connectedness and provides safe havens during extended evening hours of park operation and programming in underserved communities. Parks will be kept open to provide local youth and families with a variety of free recreational opportunities, health outreach and social services.

PAD takes place Thursdays, Fridays and Saturdays from 6 p.m. to 10 p.m. and will last until Aug. 5 at the following county parks:

Amigo, Athens, Mary M. Bethune, East Rancho Dominguez, Helen Keller, Jesse Owens Community Regional, Franklin D. Roosevelt, Ted Watkins Memorial, El Cariso, Adventure, Amelia Mayberry, Stephen Sorensen, Val Verde Community Regional, Loma Alta, Pamela, Bassett, Belvedere Community Regional, Allen J. Martin, Eugene A. Obregon, San Angelo, Ruben Salazar, Stephen Sorensen and City Terrace parks.

The 23 county parks will host free activities that include organized sports, exercise classes, teen activities, movies, swimming, concerts and movies, arts and crafts and jumpers for kids, cooking classes, and resource fairs that offer social, health, economic and legal services. Some parks will also host Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts and Mathematics (STEAM) information mobile museums and booths.

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Since its inception in 2010, PAD has helped transform County parks into safe havens for community members to participate in quality programming and gain access to valuable resources. A 2016 evaluation conducted by the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA), showed that PAD:

- Achieves high participation rates and increases access to quality services and programming (more than 175,000 people participated in PAD in 2016).
- Achieves high satisfaction rates (over 94 percent of attendees indicated they would participate in PAD again and recommend it to a friend).
- Increases collaboration among different stakeholders (95 percent of agencies that participated in the 2016 resource fairs agreed PAD makes it easier to reach target populations).
- Decreases community violence and increases perception of safety (an estimated 81 serious and violent crimes were avoided from 2010 to 2016).
- Increases physical activity and reduces the risk of chronic disease (83 percent of participants engaged in physical activity during PAD, including those who previously led sedentary lifestyles).
- Increases social cohesion and community well-being (95 percent indicated PAD improved relationships with neighbors, and 97 percent indicated PAD improved quality time with family).
- Achieves cost-savings for the County (more than \$6 million in estimated chronic disease and criminal justice costs were avoided).

"Parks After Dark is a proven program that has improved the quality-of-life in neighborhoods across Los Angeles County," said John Wicker, director of the Department of Parks and Recreation. "Through its incredible array of free activities for youth and families alike, PAD has transformed many communities for the better. It is a unique program that is making a difference across the county!"

"From a public health perspective, being physically active has profound health benefits, particularly in preventing heart disease, stroke, diabetes and even some forms of cancer," said Barbara Ferrer, director of the Department of Public Health. "Parks After Dark creates safe havens that make it easier for people to be active at local parks and take advantage of free health and social services."

PAD is led by the Los Angeles County Department of Parks and Recreation in partnership with the County Board of Supervisors, Chief Executive Office, Department of Public Health, Sheriff's Department, Probation Department, Natural History Museum of Los Angeles County and several other government agencies and community organizations.