

Lifeguard Instructor Training Program
OPRA Foundation Program Development Grant Report
The Olander Park System, Sylvania, Ohio
11/13/2020

Grant Objectives:

The objective of this grant project was to help fund the training and development of (2) Lifeguard Instructors at The Olander Park System (a.k.a. "TOPS") in Sylvania, Ohio. The training costs were estimated at around \$1500.00, for which \$750.00 was requested and approved from the OPRA Foundation.

The purpose of obtaining the Lifeguard Instructor Training was:

1. To help adequately staff the waterfront beach area at Olander Park from Memorial Day weekend until the start of school in mid-August.
2. To allow TOPS to provide lower cost training in the hopes that good, uncertified candidates could then be trained and hired as lifeguards
3. To help Olander Park better manage the swim area through proper training and instruction

Background:

The ability to hire good seasonal staffing for the Olander Lake beach and swim area has been increasingly problematic for the last few years. Because of the open water component that many local pools do not have, TOPS lifeguards require certification in both Lifeguarding and Waterfront Skills. The Waterfront Skills certification requirement makes finding qualified candidates a much more difficult proposition, and further limits the already small pool of job applicants. The Olander Park System has tried to compensate for this by hiring certified lifeguards and then having a third party provide the Waterfront Skills training several days prior to the opening of the beach and swim area.

In 2018, TOPS was forced to delay opening the beach and swim area for four weeks due to the shortage of lifeguard candidates. The beach and swim area at Lake Olander requires an absolute minimum of three lifeguards on duty at any time in order to cover the two chairs while providing the mandated break for the third lifeguard. While TOPS was finally able to locate and hire a third lifeguard, there were no reserves in case of illness or other absence. The lack of manpower reduced the availability of this recreational area to the public. An absence of just one of the lifeguards meant the beach would not open that day, with little or no advance public notice. This generated negative customer perception and impacted the overall taxpayer approval of the park.

Another reason for needing trained Lifeguard Instructors is to have staff who can provide mandatory skill refreshers and reviews (min. 4 hours of in-service training per month) as required by the Red Cross. This was previously left up to staff who were not well trained or certified to perform these activities, or by outside consultants who were paid for their services.

Project Activities and Timelines:

- July 2018 - Grant Application submitted to OPRA Foundation
- August 2018 - OPRA Foundation Educational Grant Awarded
- September 2018 - Grant Funding Received - \$750.00
- October 2018 - Begin researching certifications and class availability. Identify candidates for training.
- January 2019 - TOPS Project Manager (Dan) begins Red Cross Lifeguard certification class
- February 2019 - Dan completes Red Cross Lifeguard certification class
- February 2019 - TOPS Assistant Facility Manager (Tim) completes YMCA Lifeguard Certification class and YMCA CPR/AED/First Aid Certification class.
- March 2019 - Dan completes Red Cross Lifeguard Instructor certification class. Dan also completes a Red Cross Waterfront Skills class.
- March 2019 - Tim completes YMCA Lifeguard Instructor Certification class.
- May 2019 - Dan conducts 4 separate Waterfront Skills classes for 20 total candidates hired by TOPS, the Sylvania Area Joint Recreation District, and Northview High School.
- June 2019 - August 2019 - Dan and Tim conduct in-service training for Olander Lifeguard staff every Wednesday during the summer swim season.

Activities and Key Decisions:

The original goal was to train two of the Assistant Facilities Managers in late 2018 or early 2019 in order to have staff on site at all times who are familiar with lifeguard instruction. Unexpected staff turnover and a significant knee injury to one staff member necessitated a change in those plans. As a result, one Assistant Facilities Manager (Tim) and the Olander Park Project Manager (Dan) were trained in mid-Spring of 2018. The Assistant Facilities Manager was certified as a YMCA Lifeguard Instructor, and the Project Manager was certified as a Red Cross Lifeguard Instructor. It was not known at this time that there would be problems with the YMCA certification as it relates to lifeguard training at Olander (and Sylvania Rec.).

Actual vs. Proposed Budget:

TOPS set aside \$750.00 to match the \$750.00 from the OPRA Foundation Program Development Grant. Here are the initial proposed vs. actual expenses to date:

Description	Proposed Budget			Actual Budget		
	Est. Cost ea.	Qty.	Est. Line Total	Act. Cost ea.	Qty.	Act. Line Total
YMCA Orientation Pre-Req	\$0.00	0	\$0.00	\$20.00	1	\$20.00
YMCA LG Course	\$0.00	0	\$0.00	\$185.00	1	\$185.00
YMCA LG manual	\$0.00	0	\$0.00	\$33.00	1	\$33.00
YMCA LG Instructor Guide	\$0.00	0	\$0.00	\$28.00	1	\$28.00
YMCA First Aid Instr. Guide	\$0.00	0	\$0.00	\$60.00	1	\$60.00
YMCA Oxygen Instr. Guide	\$0.00	0	\$0.00	\$25.00	1	\$25.00
YMCA CPR Pro Instr. Guide	\$0.00	0	\$0.00	\$60.00	1	\$60.00
Shipping for manuals	\$0.00	0	\$0.00	\$11.73	1	\$11.73
YMCA LGI Course	\$0.00	0	\$0.00	\$185.00	1	\$185.00
ARC Lifeguard Class	\$300.00	2	\$600.00	\$180.00	1	\$180.00
ARC LGI Class	\$300.00	2	\$600.00	\$242.00	1	\$242.00
ARC LGI Manuals/ Videos	\$0.00	0	\$0.00	\$207.57	1	\$207.57
ARC Waterfront Skills Course	\$150.00	2	\$300.00	\$100.00	1	\$100.00
Hip Packs w/CPR Masks	\$0.00	0	\$0.00	\$15.00	2	\$30.00
	Proposed Total ====>		\$1500.00	Actual Total ====>		\$1367.30

There have been some additional unplanned expenses associated with lifeguard training, such as training materials, manuals, and hip packs with CPR masks that were required for some of the classes.

Evaluation of Outcomes and Key Takeaways:

The 2019 swim season at Olander Park was better than 2018 in a number of ways, and the park was able to secure the services of 5 lifeguards for the season. In addition, Olander staff trained all 5 of its lifeguards, plus more than 15 lifeguards for Sylvania Recreation, in Waterfront Skills (open water lifeguarding). This enabled appropriate staffing levels at multiple facilities, and for the Team Toledo Triathlon group open-water practice swims at Olander Park and the Centennial Quarry.

Looking at the revenues, in spite of the cold spring weather that kept patrons away due to cold water and lower than normal air temps in 2019, the park was able to fully utilize the swim beach facility and earn more money in June and September.

Month	2018 Revenues	2019 Revenues
Late May/June	\$765.50	\$2,871.00
July	\$4,359.00	\$4,022.00
August/Early Sept.	\$1,898.00	\$3,106.00
Revenue Totals	\$7,022.50	\$9,999.00

The Olander Park swim beach was not forced to close due to lifeguard availability in 2019, compared to 4 weeks in late May and early June in 2018. The result was more consistent revenues across the 3-½ month swim season, and almost \$3,000.00 more in revenue.

Having properly trained staff is crucial to the operation of the swim beach, and a lack of staff directly impacts revenues when the beach can't open. The ability to train before and during the season is important, and allows the park to maintain adherence to Red Cross Lifeguard regulations with respect to in-service training by having staff who can conduct the appropriate skill reviews.

In hindsight, it would have been better to have both individuals trained and certified by the same lifeguard organization for consistency. While it was interesting to see the differences in the training curriculums, it has made some items more challenging for Olander Park. The YMCA-certified instructor cannot teach the Red Cross Waterfront Skills module (which is an add-on to the lifeguard cert.). The same open water rescue skills are included in the basic YMCA lifeguard training, but the YMCA lifeguard instructor cannot conduct this additional module for Red Cross certification. Since most of the other local facilities near Olander Park hire Red Cross trained lifeguards, having the YMCA certification is not as useful.

2020 Report Update:

Because of the coronavirus, finding both willing and trained lifeguards in March and April of 2020 was nearly impossible. In addition, no lifeguard training could be conducted due to the social distancing requirements imposed by the State and Local Health Departments starting on March 16th, 2020. This meant that the availability of certified lifeguards was further reduced, with the impact being that many aquatics facilities could not open for the summer of 2020. Olander Park was fortunate to have 3 lifeguards returning from the 2019 season with 1 year left before their certification expired, and was able to hire one new lifeguard that had just been certified just prior to the Covid outbreak. Having 4 lifeguards hired for the swim beach meant Olander Park could operate nearly fully staffed for the 2020 summer season.

Based on Red Cross guidance, and in accordance with the plan approved (with minor delays) by the Lucas County Health Department, Olander Park opened its swim beach in the 3rd week of June. Capacity was limited to 80 total patrons in 16 total groups of 5 people max., with beach sites having a minimum of 10 feet of open space in between them. The lifeguards were masked all of the time except when they were in the chair surveilling or when patrolling on the water on the rescue board. A new BVM was donated by the Sylvania Fire Department to reduce or eliminate the need for mouth-to-mouth resuscitation by the lifeguards. Staff training was provided to help check and identify patrons for signs of Covid during the admission process to the beach.

Because of the precautions, planning, knowledge and training, and with a little luck, Olander Park was able to open and operate the swim beach - 1 of only 3 public facilities in NW Ohio - during the summer of 2020. The swim beach actually brought in more revenue than usual because of the lack of competition locally, and the change to 2 sessions per day (a Health Dept. requirement that allowed for time for site sanitization). A hot, dry July and August helped to keep the attendance high.

One important note: a personnel issue in mid-August led to the loss of 2 of the 4 lifeguards, threatening to shut down the swim beach for the rest of the season due to a lack of qualified staffing. Fortunately, the training afforded to the Park Project Manager, Dan, as part of this grant allowed him to fill in for the dismissed lifeguards on the weekends, meaning that Olander Park would meet the minimum staffing requirements (3 lifeguards) necessary to operate the swim beach for the last 3 weekends of the summer. Without this OPRA Foundation grant, the swim beach would have closed early, losing revenue and affecting public perception.

The positive effects of this OPRA Foundation Grant will continue for at least the next few years, as the Park intends to retain the Red Cross Lifeguard Instructor certification for Dan, and will convert Tim's certification over from YMCA to Red Cross, to allow for continued staff training and substitution (if necessary).