

Summer 2021 Report

Elementary Enrichment Activity Kits

Art



Recreation
Fire Safety
STEM



During the 2020-2021 COVID-19 pandemic, states, local government, school districts, and local organizations have made decisions about when and how to open schools and provide summer programming safely. Unfortunately, there was no easy answer or single indicator, and many variables had to be considered.

During the end of the 2021 school year, local school districts were each doing a hybrid of in-person and or remote learning.

Cities In Schools Aurora reached out to each of the four school districts (D129, D131, D204, and D308), and each school district replied that the school buildings would not be able to be utilized for any outside organizations for the summer. At that time, Aurora and the State of Illinois were still in various phases of mitigation. It was unknown at the time of planning if and when we would get to a phase to allow closer contact and try and predetermine the needs of each summer camp program. At the time of planning, it was also difficult for adults to obtain the COVID-19 vaccine. Another concern was the ability to adequately staff each summer camp program with a 1:10 staff to student ratio to accommodate any significant absences due to quarantine.

COVID-19 and the ensuing school closures have served as reminders that schools provide support and services beyond the bounds of academic instruction. Closed schools and low enrollments result in decreased access to essentials such as hot and healthy meals, childcare, afterschool and summer enrichment programs, social and emotional learning, health and mental health services, and basic human connections. Even as some schools reopen, students who remain disengaged will not benefit from the broader services that also become available.

Cities In Schools holds a commitment to strengthening families and community and shares an interest in student re-engagement with the school districts and the City of Aurora. In partnership with the City of Aurora Youth Services Department, we determined the best option again this summer was to provide engaging enrichment activity kits with various community organizations and their teams to provide high-quality learning experiences while having fun learning. They were hugely successful last summer and felt we could best serve students in all four districts equitably by hosting various distribution sites, days, and times across Aurora. The activities provided were intentional to allow students to work and play independently or with the assistance of a parent, sibling, or relative each week. Each partner also provided instructions in English and Spanish with instructions for all activities and a YouTube video or Facebook video link to coincide with each activity.

This summer, we collaborated with Northern Illinois Food Bank and their “Meals On the Move” summer food distributions at four locations across Aurora. This allowed families to pick up the enrichment kits and pick up free meals. Meals on the Move is a mobile route that provides summer meals to kids and teens, 18 and under in Aurora! As a part of the USDA’s Summer Food Service Program (SFSP), the Northern Illinois Food Bank visits different park sites across Aurora to offer free and nutritious boxed meals for youth in convenient locations.

Our four summer distribution sites and NIFB sites were Abraham Lincoln Park, Blackhawk Park, Phillips Park, and Martin Luther King, Jr. Park. We also distributed kits at Georgetown Elementary School in Indian Prairie School District in conjunction with their summer meal distribution and Homestead Elementary School in Oswego School District. Each week we distributed 100 kits at each of the six locations for a weekly total of 600 kits.

Each week on Wednesdays at Phillips Park, each community partner provided a two-hour hands-on demonstration to families with all the activities provided in their kits. Families were very excited to have their children participate in the park!





Week One –



The Alive Center provides teens with a unique place to connect, discover, and come alive! Their mission is to be a Teen-Led, Teen-Driven® (TLTD) center focused on empowering the youth of today to become the impassioned, resilient leaders of tomorrow. As a nonprofit organization, Alive offers free drop-in hours after school and over the summer, as well as a myriad of programs, classes, and events, designed to build confident and resilient teens.

Alive Aurora provided students with kits that had a fine arts theme. The activity kit was filled with fun, engaging activities like “wacky corner bookmarks,” sand art design, color scratch-off turtles, clay sculptures, watercolor postcards to send a message to someone they care about. They also received a coloring book and a

pallet of watercolor paints, paintbrushes, and scissors. The summer kit’s goal was to engage students' creativity and imagination with various arts and crafts using their small motor skills.



Fox Valley Park District

Where fun begins

Week Two –

The Fox Valley Park District is a dynamic and growing park district that serves a diverse population of more than 236,000 people. Recognized as an Illinois Distinguished Agency, Fox Valley holds the nation’s highest honor as a National Gold Medal Award winner for excellence in park and recreation management.

Serving the communities of Aurora, Montgomery, and North Aurora, the District maintains 168 parks and 48 miles of inter-connected regional trails amid 2,500 acres of parkland. Connected by the Fox River, our communities are tied together by the District’s commitment to promote vibrant, healthy lifestyles through fun and safe recreation



opportunities that are environmentally and fiscally responsible. The Fox Valley Park District...Where Fun Begins!



Fox Valley Park District provided students with a kit that had a recreation theme filled with a large rubber kickball, a jump rope, bug exploration kit, and a UNO deck of playing cards.

These activities allowed students to play individually, with a partner, or with a large group by getting creative, active, and engaging in fun ways this summer to meet the goals of the various activities.

Week Three –

FIRE MUSEUM

Aurora Regional

The Aurora Regional Fire Museum is an interactive museum devoted to the history of firefighting and fire safety. Firefighters have protected the Aurora community since 1857.



The ARFM summer activity bag included supplies for ten different activities, including a box of colored pencils, a mini Lego fire center kits, a box of chalk, crayons, glue, noisemaker, scissors, fire bucket, a firefighter water bottle, colored craft sticks, information about the Fire Museum and additional information from their safety partners. The activity goals allowed children to learn and practice skills needed to keep themselves and their families safe. The kit also provided information for families to understand the importance of fire safety technology, the development of firefighting, and how to develop their own emergency safety plan.

Materials provided the opportunity to teach students about fire history related to historical events and their impact on daily life and learn about the firefighting profession and how firefighters protect themselves.



Week Four –

In 1988, Ernest Malamud, a physicist at FermiLab, imagined a place where the mysteries of science were made accessible to everyone through interactive exhibits. SciTech Hands On Museum became the reality of those ideals. The museum is located in the heart of downtown Aurora along the Fox River in a historic 1931 US Post Office and filled with activities that convey scientific theories. Quantum physics becomes child's play, and blowing bubbles become an investigation into chemistry and surface tension.



The SciTech kits provided a variety of STEM activities. For example, children could build a balloon helicopter, create a hovercraft, build a birdfeeder, create a masterpiece by painting with magnets, experiment with thermochromic heat-sensitive paper, create a personalized LED name badge, and solve a mind-bending 3D puzzle with over 240 different solutions. In addition, materials provided the opportunity to learn about aerodynamics, nature, problem-solving geometric shapes, and more! The activity kits included binoculars, egg crate, birdseed, finger-paints, LED name badge, large magnet, cube puzzle, and hovercraft and helicopter materials.

