



Play Captain Initiative

Coined after the Block Captain and Jr. Block Captain roles, the Play Captain Initiative is a workforce development and civic-engagement initiative with the mission to empower and train teens in leadership, playful learning and facilitation to make the Play Streets and neighborhoods of Philadelphia more playful.



Come Play With Us!

Monday-Thursday

11am-4pm*

*different times at different locations

July 15-August 15

Miles Mack Boys & Girls Club
3600 block of Olive Street
3800 block of Folsom Street
3500 block of Mt. Vernon Street

PLAY
Captain Initiative



WEST PHILLY
PROMISE
NEIGHBORHOOD

FAB | YOUTH
PHILLY
INNOVATE • CONNECT • SUPPORT

www.playcaptains.com

Message from the President

About four years ago, I started dreaming about the Play Captain Initiative. It started because I'd find myself driving throughout the City during the summer, and was not always able to turn down a street I wanted to go down because there was a thin string or caution tape blocking the way. It made me wonder what was going on that this phenomenon seemed to happen only during the summer months? Then, I learned about Play Streets, a summer meal program run by Parks & Recreation. None of the streets I saw seemed very playful, so I began to imagine ways to make them so. Given my background in youth programming and youth workforce development and knowing that teens need quality summer jobs, and that summer is an ideal time to increase physical activity and decrease summer slide, I started to piece together the Play Captain Initiative. In 2016, I spent time on a Play Street in Kensington to understand how and by who they are utilized, and then in 2017 with funding and other in-kind support from sources in two different Philly neighborhoods, I piloted the PCI. Three summers later, I am grateful for the increased opportunities, the expanded and new partnerships and the ability to refine the vision. 2019 proved to be a year of significant changes and learning and I'm excited to share them with you here.



Rebecca Fabiano

REBECCA FABIANO
(SHE/HERS)

PRESIDENT

Glossary of Terms

- **Play Captain Initiative** = The summer and after school job program for teens, conceived of and run by Fab Youth Philly.
- **Play Captain/s** = Teens ages 15-19 trained, and paid to play with children. It's their job.
- **Senior Play Captain** = A teen who is 18+ , and who has been a PC at least two years.

- **Play Captain Group Leader** = An adult trained to support the teen Play Captains (1:5) as they do their job of playing with children on the Play Streets.
- **Play Captain Supervisor** = They supervise the Play Captain Group Leaders (1:3) and help to establish, nurture and maintain relationships. They also support partnerships and conduct administrative work.

- **Play Street Supervisor** = This is the adult resident who agrees to store and distribute the free summer meals. They are NOT an employee of Fab Youth Philly.
- **Play Streets of Wonder** = Program run by the City, includes partners such as PAL, Free Library of Philadelphia, Mayor's Office of Education, Read By 4th & Parks & Recreation.





FAB YOUTH PHILLY GUIDING PRINCIPLES



We start every gathering with our guiding principles recited in a call and response fashion, with everyone reciting the last line together.

- Mistakes are ok; It's ok to ask a lot of questions!
- Step up, step back; take a chance and try something new and make space for others, too
- Each one teach one; when you learn something new, share it with others
- Play safe, play hard; give your best effort in everything you do.

Take responsibility for your own learning and take time to reflect on your performance, privilege and power.

BUDGET

It is not inexpensive to run this summer program; that's because there are many elements including hiring and training staff, partnership and funds development, training for teens and then their six weeks of employment. All of this planning and preparation takes place throughout the year. This budget also includes for a year-round staff person.



Play Captain Initiative Budget for 10 Play Captains

Item	totals
Staff (Play Captains/teens & adults)	84,560.00
Program Administration	19,500.00
Training, Evaluation & Curriculum	15,300.00
Operations, Supplies and Uniforms	9,850.00
Payroll, Insurance and processing fee (18% of Payroll)	15,220.00
HR and Clearances	1,808.00
ADMIN on non W-2 payroll costs	4,465.00
TOTAL	150,703.00

if you'd like to know how this is broken down further, contact us. info@faboyouthphilly.com



80%

Number of teens for whom this is their first job.



377

Number of data collection sheets completed by staff during a 4-week period.



15

Number of Play Streets across 3 neighborhoods, up from 6 Play Streets in 2 neighborhoods in 2018.



150+

Number of books distributed on the Play Streets.

NEW IN 2019: RED CARPET ROLL OUT!

we wanted the teens to know that people in the neighborhood were rooting for them to have a productive, safe, fun and playful summer





Major Wins for Summer 2019

One of the biggest wins for Fab Youth Philly, was **hiring an Administrative Assistant** in early May. With solid administrative support, we were able to **refine our procedures and improve efficiencies and our customer service**. We also **increased the number of staff** and hired exceptional individuals including people who had previously worked at organizations like: PlayWorks, PowerCorps Philadelphia, YouthBuild, ArtWell and PAL (Police Athletic League). In total we hired 8 Group Leaders and 3 Supervisors, which allowed us to decrease our staff: teen ratio from 1:12 to 1:5, which enabled us to build

stronger relationships with teens and provide more day to day support. 80% of teens said this was their first job.

“Hi, this is Paula’s mom, and I just wanna say I got the message and I appreciate you very much. You guys are the best. Fab all the way! I wanna thank you for giving her an opportunity to have her first job with you guys; we love it. Keep on training her and doing them right for us, because we’re very proud of her and you guys made that happen.”

With administrative support and more staff in place and trained earlier than last summer, we were able to have the teens complete all of their paperwork, including getting their clearances, PRIOR to the start of training (as opposed to on the first day), which enabled us to spend more time in training on topics related to their role.

The change in adult:teen ratio allowed staff to build and foster stronger relationships with the teens and to provide "real time" coaching and feedback for teens to be effective in their job.

We also expanded into Hunting Park this summer, a new neighborhood for us, with funding from the Mayor's Office of Education and the William Penn Foundation. This partnership allowed us to hire more teens and expand our reach. It also allowed us to test several elements of our model including, but not limited to: Hiring teens through WorkReady, having a split daily schedule (Monday & Tuesday in one neighborhood and Wednesday and Thursday in another neighborhood), and working with recreation centers and summer camps.



PARTNERSHIP WITH THE CITY

We developed and led the 2-day training for the partners associated with the Playstreets of Wonder - the name of the work funded through the Mayor's Office of Education (MOE). We trained approximately 12 people from the partner organizations including MOE, Police Athletic League (PAL) and also Free Library of Philadelphia on playful learning and positive youth development.

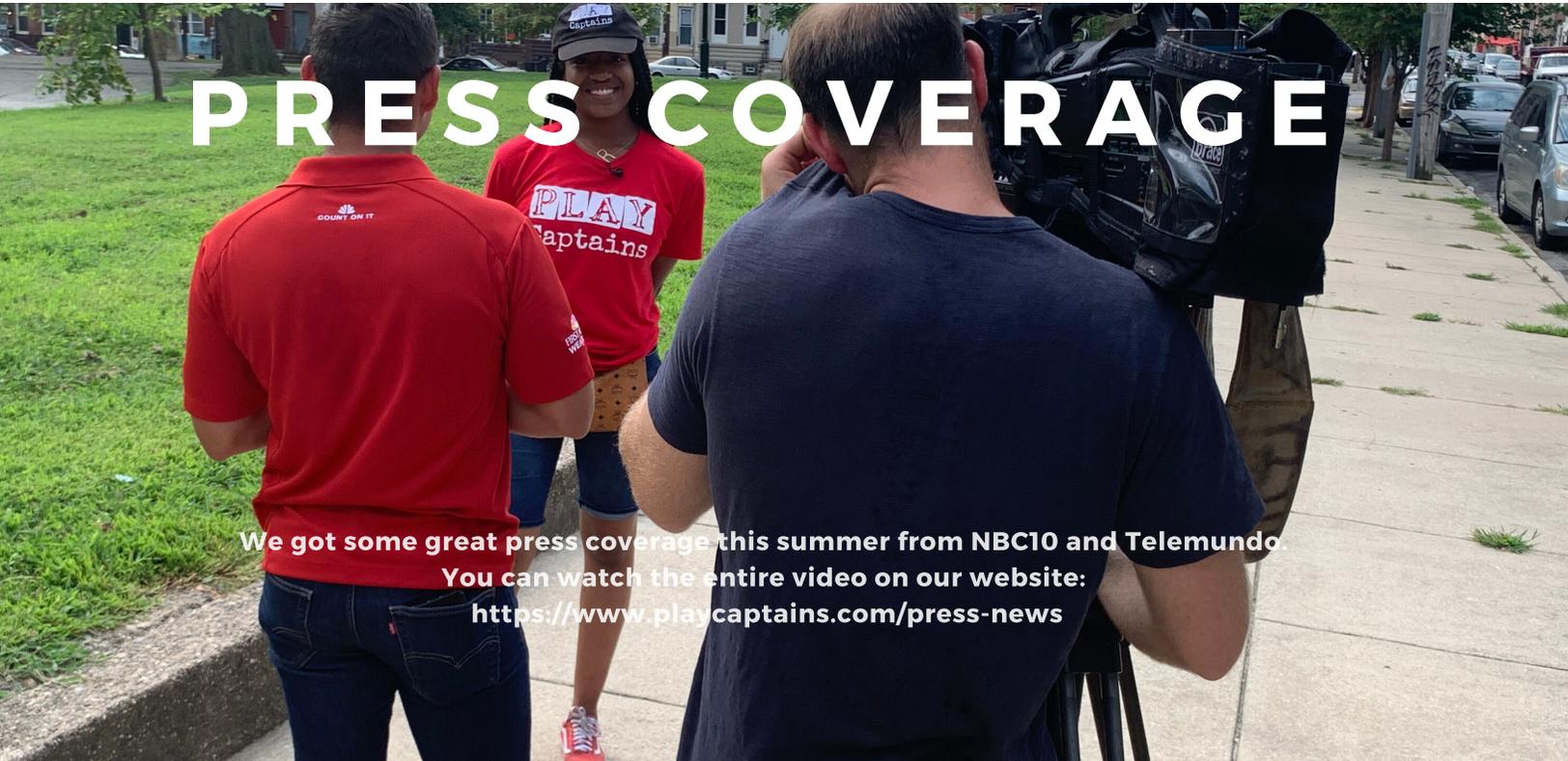
We also connected the staff at MOE with our evaluator at Temple Infant and Child Lab who created the street level data collection tools for us; The Lab ended up adapting the tool for all the partners to use (FYP, PAL and Free Library) as well as providing extensive training on how to use correctly. They will also be assessing the data that was collected.

We benefited from exceptional training from the Free Library on how to better integrate literacy into our playful learning activities.



PRESS COVERAGE

We got some great press coverage this summer from NBC10 and Telemundo. You can watch the entire video on our website: <https://www.playcaptains.com/press-news>



2018

- **3 Group Leaders (supporting upto 12 Play Captains per team)**
- **1 Project Manager**
- **24 hours of Staff Training & Prep**
- **35 Play Captains**
- **6 Play Streets**
- **2 neighborhoods**
- **Data collected informally by the Play Captains**
- **Open House for visitors**
- **One large end of program celebration**

2019

- **8 Group Leaders (supporting up to 6 Play Captains per team)**
 - **3 Supervisors (supporting the Group Leaders)**
 - **1 Administrative Assistant**
 - **80 hours of Staff Training & Prep**
 - **4 Trainers to facilitate the Play Captain Training**
 - **43 Play Captains**
 - **15 Play Streets**
 - **3 neighborhoods**
 - **1 New Funder**
 - **Play Captain paperwork & on-boarding PRIOR to orientation**
 - **Utilized WorkReady to hire some of the Play Captains**
 - **Split Schedules (e.g., M/W & T/Th)**
 - **Partnered with Recreation Centers & Summer Camps**
 - **Nearly 20 hours of data collection training completed by staff**
 - **Data collection by Group Leaders**
 - **Open House for visitors**
 - **Red Carpet Roll Out**
 - **Individual celebrations by neighborhood**
-

Staff & Team Members

THE AWESOME PEOPLE BEHIND THE PCI



KEVIN VELTRI
(HE/HIM)

ADMINISTRATIVE ASSISTANT



BRIANA CLARKE
(SHE/HER)

SUPERVISOR WEST PHILLY



STEPHANIE STROCKIS
(SHE/HER)

SUPERVISOR, WEST PHILLY



EMILIA AUTIN-HEFNER
(SHE/HER)

SUPERVISOR HUNTING PARK &
KENSINGTON



OMARI COLSON
(HE/HIM)

GROUP LEADER,
HUNTING PARK



NOAH MATHIS
(HE/HIM)

GROUP LEADER,
HUNTING PARK

Staff & Team Members

THE AWESOME PEOPLE BEHIND THE PCI



WILSON CARTAGENA
(HE/HIM)
GROUP LEADER, KENSINGTON



DASIA MARTINEZ
(SHE/HER)
GROUP LEADER, KENSINGTON



ASIA WEEKS
(SHE/HER)
GROUP LEADER, WEST PHILLY



CODY JONES
(HE/HIM)
GROUP LEADER, WEST PHILLY

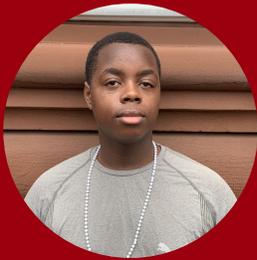


STONIE HULL
(SHE/HER)
GROUP LEADER, WEST PHILLY



JAHQUAN NELSON
(HE/HIM)
GROUP LEADER, WEST PHILLY

Meet the Play Captains



BEN GUPTON
(HE/HIM)
PLAY CAPTAIN,
KENSINGTON



JOSEPH DRAYTON
(HE/HIM)
PLAY CAPTAIN,
KENSINGTON



WILSANDER DOTEI
(HE/HIM)
PLAY CAPTAIN,
KENSINGTON



SANIYA JENNINGS
(SHE/HER)
PLAY CAPTAIN,
KENSINGTON



ROSEMARY VALENTIN
(SHE/HER)
PLAY CAPTAIN,
KENSINGTON



JUSTIN HAMID-MARTINEZ
(HE/HIM)
PLAY CAPTAIN,
KENSINGTON



SHERREN WHITEHEAD
(SHE/HER)
PLAY CAPTAIN,
KENSINGTON



JOSHUA RIVERA
(HE/HIM)
PLAY CAPTAIN,
KENSINGTON

Meet the Play Captains



JADA BANKS
(SHE/HER)
PLAY CAPTAIN,
HUNTING PARK



ZAKIA YUILLE
(SHE/HER)
PLAY CAPTAIN,
HUNTING PARK



DARRELL PALMER
(THEY/THEM)
PLAY CAPTAIN,
HUNTING PARK



ANJA TAYLOR
(SHE/HER)
PLAY CAPTAIN,
HUNTING PARK



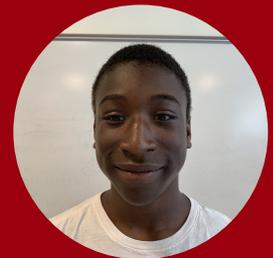
JAL'AH BROWN
(SHE/HER)
PLAY CAPTAIN,
WEST PHILLY



TAYONNIE LOZADA
(SHE/HER)
PLAY CAPTAIN,
WEST PHILLY



AMIRAH KNOX
(SHE/HER)
PLAY CAPTAIN,
WEST PHILLY



AZEEM TURNER
(HE/HIM)
PLAY CAPTAIN,
WEST PHILLY

Meet the Play Captains



DESTINI SMITH
(SHE/HER)
PLAY CAPTAIN,
WEST PHILLY



MEKHI LUKE
(HE/HIM)
PLAY CAPTAIN,
WEST PHILLY



PAULA FLOYD
(SHE/HER)
PLAY CAPTAIN,
WEST PHILLY



MALIK WARD
(HE/HIM)
PLAY CAPTAIN,
WEST PHILLY



RONALD JOHNSON
(HE/HIM)
PLAY CAPTAIN,
WEST PHILLY



FELICITY POWELL
(SHE/HER)
PLAY CAPTAIN,
WEST PHILLY



MOSADI PEARSON
(HE/HIM)
PLAY CAPTAIN,
WEST PHILLY



NAKIR SYLVESTER
(HE/HIM)
PLAY CAPTAIN,
WEST PHILLY

Meet the Play Captains



JANIYAH BRIDGES
(SHE/HER)
PLAY CAPTAIN,
WEST PHILLY



**MIKEYA GARRETT-
PORTER**
(SHE/HER)
PLAY CAPTAIN,
WEST PHILLY



ALANNA WELLS
(SHE/HER)
PLAY CAPTAIN,
WEST PHILLY



IYONNAH MINOR
(SHE/HER)
PLAY CAPTAIN,
WEST PHILLY



AHJANAY'AH CLARKE
(SHE/HER)
PLAY CAPTAIN,
WEST PHILLY



DEJA TODD
(SHE/HER)
PLAY CAPTAIN,
WEST PHILLY



AYANNA BRIDGES
(SHE/HER)
PLAY CAPTAIN,
WEST PHILLY



LEONARD LEWIS
(HE/HIM)
PLAY CAPTAIN,
WEST PHILLY

Meet the Play Captains



SHAWN ZUBER
(HE/HIM)
PLAY CAPTAIN,
WEST PHILLY



**KAVON LEWIS-
JONES**
(HE/HIM)
PLAY CAPTAIN,
WEST PHILLY

AHJANAY'AH CLARKE
(SHE/HER)
PLAY CAPTAIN,
WEST PHILADELPHIA

DEJA TODD
(SHE/HER)
PLAY CAPTAIN,
WEST PHILADELPHIA

AYANNA BRIDGES
(SHE/HER)
PLAY CAPTAIN,
WEST PHILADELPHIA



2019 may have been the hottest summer on record! The high temperatures coincided with the start of the teens being on the Play Streets. While there isn't anything we can do about the high temperatures, when this and other challenges presented, we **chose to focus on the things we could change or adjust.**

While it was extremely hot, we chose not to pull the teens off the Play Streets even on the *hottest* days. This is because consistency is critical when establishing relationships and we were **in two new neighborhoods** where no one knew us. We encouraged the teens to **walk along shady blocks and play 'low energy' games** and activities like cards, board games and reading. They **took more breaks and were encouraged to drink a lot of water.** We even built drinking water into the games, by having a 'toast' and taking a sip of water before they started the game and then toasting their effort at the end of an activity.

"...[I] love when these teens come to our block! thank you for keeping our kids busy." - Street Supervisor, Kensington

When the weather was super hot, parents tended to keep their children inside, so especially at the start of the summer, there were often **low numbers of children on several Play Streets**, which negatively impacted teens' morale. Nonetheless, by being present every day **both children and adults began to look for us and count on us showing up at a specific time.**

We ended up doing two rounds of hanging door tags on homes to let people know we were in their neighborhood and continued to show up, even when the numbers of children on the streets were low. On some occasions, when there we NO children at all, **a team would join another team on a different street.**

CHALLENGES AND THE LESSONS WE LEARNED FROM THEM CONTINUED

In each neighborhood the Play Captains are in, we set up a 'home base', essentially an office, which serves as a pre-employment training space, a daily meeting space for check-in, a cool place for breaks and meetings, as well as a place to store the multitude of supplies the teens use. We've been fortunate to have clean, professional and comfortable space donated in the past. **Ideally, this space is within .25 miles of the cluster of Play Streets.**

HOME BASES

As we expanded into two new neighborhoods, we **required two new spaces**. Unfortunately, these two new spaces were less than ideal; one was nearly **1.5 miles from the farthest cluster of Play Streets**. Both spaces were in the basement of different schools, both lacked air conditioning, and the spaces were dingy, dark and uninspiring. Only one had a refrigerator to store lunches and keep drinks cold. And while we can do things like buy or rent a refrigerator, put a fan in every corner of the room and decorate the space to liven it up (and we did all of those things!), we can't make a 1.5 mile walk shorter. We've learned that **home-bases MUST be closer to the Play Streets. Teens lose steam on the long walk and it's hard to replenish the carts when the supplies are so far away!**

CHALLENGES AND THE LESSONS WE LEARNED FROM THEM CONTINUED

The PCI was conceived in order to make the **Play Streets more playful**. Nonetheless, we received several requests, including from one of our funders, to **partner with recreation centers and summer camp programs** to provide some additional supports and activities. We were skeptical, but gave it a try.

PLAY STREETS OR REC CENTERS?

After trying to partner with two recreation centers and a summer camp, run out of a public school, we learned that our current model is **best for the Play Streets, and do not expect to place Play Captains (under our current model) in places other than on the Play Streets**. We want to go where there are children that have no, or limited opportunities for facilitated or structured physical activities and playful learning games (activities that also work to decrease summer slide). Also, it's extremely difficult to coordinate schedules (we have a complex schedule based on numerous factors), and the adults at those programs see our Play Captains as an opportunity for a break, and so they tend to disappear or become hands off.

CHALLENGES AND THE LESSONS WE LEARNED FROM THEM CONTINUED

schedules

Our model has the Play Captains rotating across a cluster of Play Streets each day at the same time of the day, four days per week. This enabled the teens to establish their presence following a predictable schedule and to build relationships with the children, their families and the Play Street Supervisor. We had requests from our funders and community organizations to expand our reach this summer. In order to accommodate this request, we had to divide the week in two focusing on a cluster of Play Streets in one neighborhood on Mondays and Tuesdays, and another neighborhood on Wednesdays and Thursdays.

This two day schedule really prevented the teens from establishing and nurturing relationships and ended up not working. So, after two weeks, we went back to our original schedule of being on the same streets four days of the week (on Fridays, the teens participate in professional development for 2.5 hours). By the fourth week, on several Play Streets there were children waiting on their stoops or porch for the Play Captains to arrive. And often, at the end of the day the Play Captains would say 'see you tomorrow' and a child or two would shout out the time the teens were expected to return, indicating they not only looked forward to the teens coming, but also knew when to expect them.

Daily Schedule		FRIDAY PD DAY
9:30-10:00	Staff arrives, prep, review, etc.	Weekly PD from 9:30-12:30 for everyone 12:30-1:30 Team meetings for Supervisors & Group Leaders
10:00-10:30	PCs arrive, check-in & team prep/planning time	
10:30-10:45	whole group Guiding Principles, announcements	
10:45-11:00	Walk to Play Street	
11:00-11:45	FIRST PLAY STREET	
11:45-12:00	Walk to Play Street	
12:00-12:45	SECOND PLAY STREET	
12:45-1:00	Walk back to Center	
1:00-2:00	LUNCH- clock out & back in	
2:00-2:15	Walk to Play Street	
2:15-3:00	THIRD PLAY STREET	Adults total weekly hours: 28 (with flexibility up to 32) (M-Th) Start: 9:30 (M-Th) End: 4:30 Friday 9:30-1:30 Teen total weekly hours: 23 (with flexibility up to 28 hours) (M-Th) Start: 10:00 (M-Th) End: 4:00 Friday 9:30-12:30
3:00-3:15	Walk to Play Street	
3:15-4:00	FOURTH PLAY STREET	
4:00-4:15	PC DISMISSED FROM STREET at 4pm STAFF WALKS BACK TO OFFICE (with the cart)	
4:15-4:30	CLEAN UP, DEBRIEF- STAFF ONLY	

challenges and the lessons

we learned from
them continued



DAY TO DAY ON THE PLAY STREETS

We set an expectation with the Play Captains that **there should always be some kind of activity on the Play Streets.** However, there were times when it was very hot, or there were few children on the Play Streets and the teens weren't clear about what kind of activities they should be doing, so we introduced the ideas of **"low", "medium" and "high" activities.** "Low" activities might include reading, playing cards or a board game. "Medium" might include a game of hot, hot cold (like duck, duck, goose with water), or Chi Master or Ships and Sailors. And "high" activities might mean tag, or ultimate football. Low requires no moving around, medium requires some moving and high means lots of moving and running. **This clarity helped the Group Leaders provide clear feedback and more concrete real-time coaching to the teens.**

challenges and the lessons we learned from them continued



We had three injuries this summer, from which, thankfully everyone recovered. Staff followed all the expected procedures for when there is a severe injury and, thankfully, while we don't want to have any accidents, the accidents happened to our teens and not any of the children from the Play Streets.

Safety is PARAMOUNT in this work and so we plan to revisit our health and wellness policies to make sure that everyone is well at work. While we don't currently require everyone to have a physical exam, we may require everyone to complete a health self-assessment.

training for adults

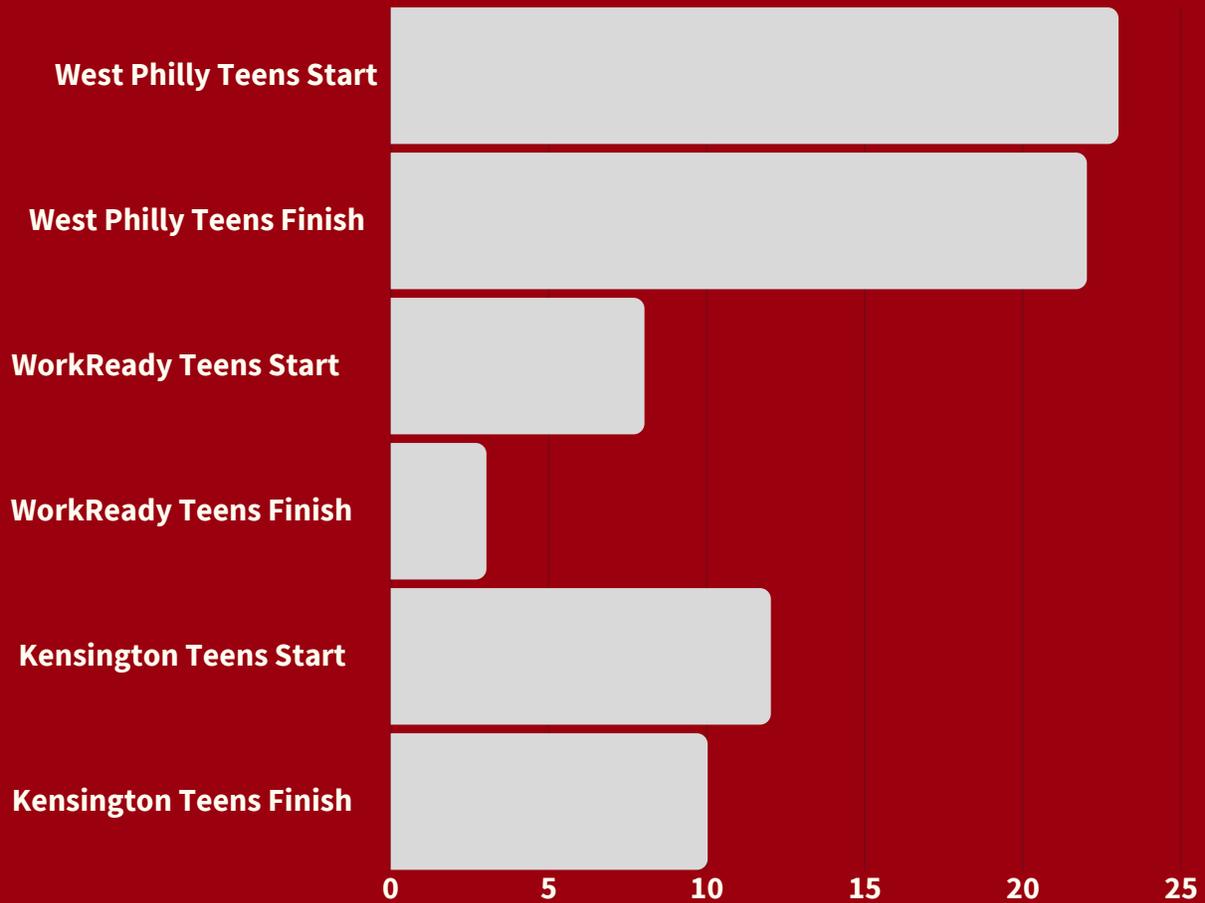


Adults **received approximately 80 hours of training** during the month of June, which was **56 more hours of training than we were able to provide in 2018**. Topics included: Positive Youth Development, Safety & First Aid, Facilitation, Helping Skills, and Real Time Coaching. Different this year from 2018, was that the adults, as opposed to the Play Captains collected the daily data on the Play Streets, so they received nearly **20 hours of data collection training from Temple University Infant and Child Play Lab**. We stretched the training out over a month, and realized that we don't need quite that much time, so plan to reduce it to three weeks, or approximately 60 hours for 2020. We also plan to **deepen the emphasis on building skills around providing feedback and conflict resolution** and create more time for skills building around motivation, coaching and engagement. **We plan for Supervisors to receive a week of training prior to the Group Leaders starting**, and will include the Supervisors as facilitators in the training of the Group Leaders.

training for teens



We heard from the teens that **training "felt too much like school"**, and so one way to reduce the off-task behavior and side chatter (which is also sometimes like what school feels like), we broke the large groups into smaller groups whenever possible. **We plan to eliminate some topics** like child development (and offer that later during a weekly PD after they have had the chance to experience different age groups) and **add time focusing on effective, professional and appropriate communication and conflict resolution**. Additionally, we want to try to create time for them to **practice ON the Play Streets during training and** practice the daily rituals that occur on the Play Streets more explicitly; we also plan introduce & practice low, medium & high activities sooner, initiate 'verbal warnings' during training (as opposed to waiting until they are hired) and create clearer roles for Group Leaders & Supervisors to play during training.



Play Captain Retention

- In West Philly, we only had one teen not complete the full six weeks of employment and that was for health-related reasons.
- Six teens returned for a second year and one returned for a third year (7 alumni in total).
- Teens who did not complete the training nor the employment expressed that it felt 'too much like school' and not enough like a 'real job'.
- We had the highest turnover with the teens hired through WorkReady.

Work Ready



We were able to expand into another neighborhood, hire more teens and test several ideas with funding from a partnership with the Mayor's Office of Education, which received a pilot grant from the William Penn Foundation, **To supplement funding and support youth salaries, Fab Youth Philly received 10 WorkReady slots that had been allocated to Parks and Recreation.** The process for teens to apply for WorkReady begins in April, We were given 20 teens to interview to narrow it down to 10 teens. After identifying the 10, and working closely with them and Parks and Recreation to get all the appropriate paperwork, only 8 teens had heard back from Parks and Recreation by the time our training started, so we started with fewer teens than expected. To balance out the teams, we pulled two teens from the Kensington team,

Parks and Recreation requires teens who are 18+ to get the FBI Clearance in addition to the Child Abuse and Criminal Background Checks- however two of our 18 year old WorkReady teens **were not told about this requirement (nor were any of the Fab Youth Philly staff supporting the teens with their paperwork) until two weeks into their employment with us.** One of our supervisors spent a full day at the DMV and City Hall working with the teens to not only get their fingerprints, but also the required State documents needed to get the fingerprints.

Another challenge is that Fab Youth Philly pays above minimum wage and WorkReady does not (though it is changing this in 2020 and increasing the hourly rate). We were not comfortable having some teens on the same team earning different amounts for the same work. We tried to address this by having a separate WorkReady team. **Not only were our pay rates different, but we pay our teens every two weeks, WorkReady says they are paying every two weeks, but teens didn't get paid until after 4 weeks of employment; and again after the program ended.**

Despite the challenges, given that WorkReady provides a significant amount of funding for summer jobs, **we want to find ways to tap into this resource.**

GOALS FOR 2020 AND BEYOND

PARTNERSHIPS

Identify a new partner in Kensington to fund 10 slots and find ways to work with PYN & Parks & Recreation that align with our values and our model.

DONATIONS & FUNDING

Seek donations for supplies and materials to reduce some costs. Identify additional funding sources.

ADJUST & REVISE

Make programmatic changes to training and day-to-day operations based on data and feedback.



CLOSING REMARKS 2019

Congratulations! You did it. You have completed your summer job as a Play Captain. This is our third summer running the Play Captain Initiative and just as I was last year and the year before, when I was putting the film together I was struck by how much you have changed in just a few weeks. **Do you feel different?** Some of you have had some major 'growth spurts this summer'. Some of you have gone from self-identifying as shy, reserved, and cautious, to becoming outgoing, courageous and confident. Others of you have matured into your leadership and strengthened your ability to motivate and support others.

You not only survived but you thrived in, 90 degree weather (it's apparently been the hottest summer on record!), unexpected rain storms, slow days and busy days on the Play Streets; you dug deep into places I'm not sure all of you have gone before to stay focused, professional, and to support your peers. Can you see the ways you have grown and developed this summer? We can.

You make me and all of the staff proud. You make me believe this is the right work to do, even when it gets challenging. *continued...*





You make me feel hopeful. Every time an adult or news outfit talks about “what’s wrong with kids these days?” I want to introduce those people to each of you. Then they would know how much you care about your community. They would know that you want to help reduce ‘summer slide’ so children go back to school on grade level. They would know that you want to create positive experiences for other children that you didn’t always have for yourself.

By a show of hands, how many people here know how to ride a bike? When someone is learning to ride a bike, often, they go from a tricycle to training wheels, to no training wheels. Some people go right to the big kid bike, but this is how it typically works. The tricycle and the training wheels allow someone to understand the mechanics of riding a bike and how balance works when coupled with motion. This usually happens with lots and lots of practice, through trial and error and it helps to have lots of encouragement and someone saying: “use your legs, look straight ahead; you can do this!” and “try again” and “give it another try”. In fact, I heard a lot of you say these kinds of things to children who were trying something new this summer.

Training wheels, perhaps most importantly, allow the rider to develop the confidence to trust one’s ability to ride a bike on their own. There was a point last summer when I began to think about The Play Captain Initiative like a bike with training wheels. I want you to have the opportunity to practice the mechanics of work.

For most of you, this is your first job. That means you are learning how to show up to work on time, how to complete tasks by when you are told to do them, how to work on a team and work independently, how to effectively manage your time and how to communicate with all kinds of people. And, like learning the mechanics of how to ride a bike, it takes hours of practice learning about how to be a great employee, colleague and co-worker.

I know there were many times this summer when this job felt a little (or a lot) like school; maybe now is even one of those times. I need you to know that some jobs are like school in some ways. And maybe it feels a little like school because your experiences thus far have only been school, or a specific type of job, like fast food or retail. Maybe you haven't been exposed to or experienced the kind of job, where you spend time learning and planning, working together and independently. Where your opinion matters and is taken into consideration when changes are to be made. Maybe you haven't had a job, where people spend a lot of time talking, thinking, and creating.

And unfortunately, much of the world doesn't expect you to be prepared for or excel in this kind of a job. We want you to be prepared to excel in any job you want, in jobs other than fast food and retail. To do this, you'll have to keep developing your workplace skills and deepening your confidence. We're glad to have had a small part in that this summer.

To the Fab Youth Philly team: Thank you for your flexibility, your can-do attitude, your commitment to and your care for the Play Captains and the success of this initiative.

This is not goodbye. Our door is always open. And we plan to stay in touch with you during the school year. We hope you'll reach out if you need something and just to say hello.

Lastly, to each Play Captain. Thank you for choosing this as your first or second job. I see you. We see you. We love you... Yep, at some jobs, you even tell people you love them.

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Play Captains bring Playstreets to life in Kensington

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In 2016, Rebecca Fabiano, the president of Fab Youth Philly, jumpstarted an idea that would take Philadelphia's Playstreets one step further: she created "Play Captains," a program that would employ teenagers to incorporate playful learning for children during the summer.

"Part of this idea came from living in Philadelphia for many years," Fabiano said. "In the summer, I [would be] driving through the neighborhoods. I wouldn't be able to get down a particular street because it was closed off, but there was nothing happening."

After doing some research, Fabiano learned that these closed-off streets were called "Playstreets," which have been facilitated by Philadelphia Parks and Recreation for over 50 years.

In the summer months, they're designated safe places for children to play and eat a free meal. Fabiano, who has a background in youth development, decided that she wanted to put teenagers on the Playstreets as mentors to bring life to the program.

"The 'Play Captain' title is supposed to be a reflection of the block captain role that exists in Philadelphia," Fabiano said. "We're using Philly-centric language so that it's familiar to folks."

To start Play Captains, Fabiano began frequenting the Playstreets, leading activities, and working with the adult supervisors there.

In 2017, the program's first partnerships emerged — Impact Services in Kensington, a non-profit focused on bettering the community, and West Philadelphia Promise Neighborhoods, a program that works with young children in West Philadelphia. "It felt like, to me, an opportunity to take several systems that were functioning independently and get them to function in a more coordinated way," Fabiano said.

At first, the Play Captains program began with just one adult supervisor in Kensington, but quickly expanded to a team of five teenagers ranging in age from 15 to 19 in Kensington, and five in West Philadelphia the following year. Each teenager gets their own street. “

The idea is that Play Captains would bring summer camp to the street,” said Play Captains group leader Emilia Autin-Hefner. “We want to bring the games and activities to the children and residents.”

The Play Captains are under the supervision of adults like Autin-Hefner. Leaders like Autin-Hefner help facilitate planning activities, gathering materials, and traveling around the Playstreets to supervise. “I [work] with the residents on the street trying to get to know them,” Autin-Hefner said. “I’m talking to parents if they’re out [and] street supervisors. I’m really trying to get a sense of the neighborhood and if they have ideas or suggestions for the Play Captains.”

Nineteen-year-old Joshua Quinones of Kensington began working as a Play Captain in 2017. “I’ve always liked to help people,” said Quinones, who recently aged out of the program. “I thought that I was a good fit since I’m already used to the [Kensington] area.”

Quinones said that as a Play Captain, he would do physical activities as well as educational activities that would incorporate math and literacy, and play water games to keep the children cool in the summer heat. According to Quinones, he loves working with children and values the relationships he made working in that role.

“When I first started, I was just getting acquainted with the kids,” Quinones said. “When I came back the second year, the kids were like, ‘Hey, Josh is back.’”

Quinones now works as a seasonal library assistant at McPherson Square Library and uses the skills he learned from being a Play Captain to help him work with the children there.

Each Play Captain goes through a five-day training session before beginning to work on the Playstreets, which teaches them the concept of playful learning as well as basic safety and first aid training. They are also taught what to do in the case of an emergency, such as finding an adult or knowing to who to call.

“We have really honest conversations [with our teens] about the fact that they’re going to walk by people who are actively using and selling drugs [in Kensington],” Fabiano said. “We talk about what to do if you see someone unconscious, or overdosing.”

Fabiano says that the Play Captains and adult group leaders have protocols in the case of an emergency and that they work closely with the local police districts and community relations officers. They have also developed safe havens for the Play Captains to go to in the event of an emergency, such as a nearby corner store.





“The store owner knows that the teenager in the red shirt that says ‘Play Captain’ is part of our program,” Fabiano said. This summer, the Play Captains will be out on the street through August 16th. According to Autin-Hefner, the bonds between the children and Play Captains are the most gratifying aspect of the program for everyone involved.

“The kids are calling for them when they’re not on the street,” Autin-Hefner said. “If [the Play Captains] aren’t there, the kids are asking where they are. The relationships they are able to build in such a short period of time is the most rewarding part.”



City of Philadelphia

For Immediate Release: June 11, 2019

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The City of Philadelphia is launching a new partnered-project aimed at combating “summer slide”.

An annual report is a comprehensive report on a company's activities throughout the preceding year.

PHILADELPHIA - This summer, the Citywide Out-of-School Time Initiative and partners will bring additional resources for youth literacy and enriched play directly to neighborhood children on ten city blocks selected to be “Playstreets of Wonder”, in coordination with Philadelphia Parks & Recreation’s long-standing Playstreets program.

This two-year pilot project is funded through a grant from the William Penn Foundation. The idea is to create and test a model of this approach for delivering summer enrichment to children.

The Citywide Out-of-School Time Initiative leads this project in partnership with Philadelphia Parks & Recreation, Free Library of Philadelphia, Police Athletic League (PAL), Read by 4th, and Fab Youth Philly. The Playful Learning Landscapes Initiative and Temple University Infant and Child Laboratory have created a data collection tool for this project, which will track engagement in literacy and numeracy activities and engagement in healthy-mentoring relationships.

At each of the Playstreets of Wonder, project partners will deliver additional services to support children’s well-being and education.

PAL will lead literacy-focused physical activities, the Free Library of Philadelphia will provide books and summer reading activities, and Read by 4th will provide training for Reading Captains. Young adults employed through Workready and Fab Youth Philly will act as “Play Captains” to lead activities for children. The Playstreets are operated by Philadelphia Parks & Recreation, which also provides healthy summer meals and snacks to children ages 18 and under.

The ten playstreets in this pilot are located in the 19134 and 19140 zip codes. Streets were chosen based on the neighborhoods’ poverty, hunger, and literacy rates.



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