

Fast 5 Friday

November 2021

So How Are Things?

Welcome back! For our new grantees, this is Fast 5 Friday is typically posted on the first Friday of the month as a means of getting a message out while having some fun doing it. For those keeping score at home, afterschool programs are experiencing some issues as we adjust back to life as we knew it. I have taken numerous calls from programs experiencing shortages of staff, which pretty much affects every phase of your program. Less staff means, less children and family members served, lower numbers in KCC, and ultimately less of your budget expended. Just from me to you: we understand! Just as the pandemic shutdown forced us to come up with alternate programming, we will work with you through the staff shortages. The key is of course communication: with us, your partners, your administrators, and most importantly the staff you currently have.

So how do we recruit more staff in this crazy job market? Who knows? However, a conversation I recently had with a college student may provide some insight. This particular student was looking for a job (which there's no shortage of) and I mentioned why not try an afterschool program? My selling points: networking, working with youth, a flexible schedule, the potential for advancement, and potential college credit. The student's response was "I don't want to be a babysitter". I was stunned. Did I get in a time machine and go back to 2004 because that is the narrative we have been fighting for years and I thought we had finally won, sadly apparently not.

Unfortunately, this appears to be a problem everywhere. So, how can afterschool programs compete for quality staff when other jobs: pay more, give bonuses, and raises. The answer is I honestly do not know. A part of me thinks we wait this out, do the best we can for now, and wait for the market to stabilize.

As I have said since the beginning of COVID-19, afterschool programs are what kept kids and families engaged by finding unique ways to still deliver programming at a time when nobody else could. Perhaps we need that mindset now.

One of my hobbies is listening to pro wrestling podcasts. I was listening to one recently where three hosts viewed a pay-per-view from 1997. The company had signed some new wrestlers from Mexico who are very acrobatic and can seemingly fly around the ring. When asked how they were able to capture the attention of the audience so well the host's response was "we gave them something they had never seen before". Perhaps when it comes to recruiting staff we need to do the same thing. Like I said earlier, think of all of the positives that come with working at an afterschool program: flexible schedule, meeting new people, working with youth, earning credits, literally the list can go on forever.

How do we recruit youth to our programs? They get to experience things that are not part of the school day, have fun, learn, grow academically and socially. Most of what I have mentioned also apply to staff, as it is literally a fun job.

We know many of you are struggling right now with staffing shortages. Make sure you communicate with us and we will absolutely work with you. Hang in there! We appreciate all that you do!