

RICHMOND, CALIFORNIA

On Saturday August 13, 2016, a sea of women and girls in blue working woman's attire and polka dot bandanas gathered at the Rosie the Riveter World War II Home Front National Historic Park to reclaim the Guinness World Record for the most number of women dressed as Rosie the Riveter at a single gathering. With 2,229 Rosies, the National Park succeeded in eclipsing the previous year's record, but more importantly provided a unique way for the community to maintain the memory and history of the iconic WWII character.

This is a snapshot of the diverse and supportive community of parks and public lands in Richmond, California, an urban community that is part of the larger San Francisco Bay Area. Diversity is part of the fabric of the city. People of color make up nearly 70% of the city's population, and they bring with them cultural celebrations and traditions like Juneteenth, Cinco de Mayo, and the Richmond Native American Pow-Wow. While culturally rich, Richmond faces health issues such as high rates of obesity and type-II diabetes, which disproportionately affect people of color. Health service providers and the local government facilitate wellness education projects to address this; the Park Service has a place in that discourse as well.

Through interviewing Kieron Slaughter about his last two years as the Urban Fellow in Richmond at Rosie the Riveter, Slaughter stressed how connecting recreational opportunities through the lens

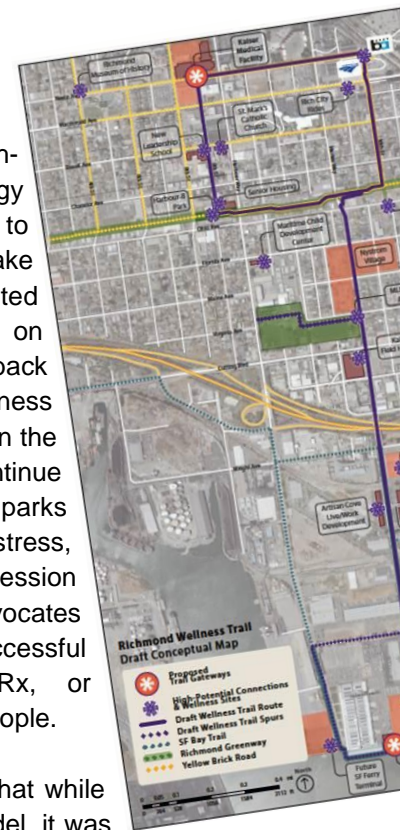
of improving health was a model way to implement the Urban Agenda, and the main focus of the work of the National Park Service during the pilot in Richmond.

To Slaughter, the vision for Urban Agenda implementation in Richmond was "to increase the visibility of the NPS through a key project that can be attributed to the model phase." Through conversations with the community and local stakeholders, NPS staff honed in on increasing access to the outdoors and the health of Richmond communities. What evolved from this focus was the Richmond Wellness Trail, the flagship example of applying the principles of the Urban Agenda in Richmond. The first of its kind in the Pacific West Region of NPS, the "active trail" will be a safe, inviting, multimodal route that inspires a healthy, active lifestyle - increasing connections among historic Downtown Richmond, known also as the Iron Triangle, the natural and historic features of the waterfront and the Rosie the Riveter WWII Home Front National Historical Park Visitor Center. It showcases murals and art installations with positive messaging, fitness equipment, and opportunities for

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connections with health-focused technology applications, all designed to inspire visitors to make health and wellness-oriented lifestyle changes. "Based on the success and feedback from the pilot, the Wellness Trail represents a direction the Park Service should continue — framing and utilizing parks as a place for relieving stress, fighting obesity, depression etc," Slaughter advocates pointing to new successful programs like Park Rx, or Healthy Parks Healthy People.

Slaughter also stressed that while working on this large model, it was important for NPS to also "focus on small but highly visible events that showcased applications of the three principles." One example of this was the renovation of John F. Kennedy Park, a seven-acre, beleaguered park for which the surrounding community had long-expressed a need for repair. NPS, the Trust for Public Land, and the City of Richmond gathered almost 400 people to carry out 25 simultaneous projects on one afternoon, to successfully rebuild the park in a single day. In a park that hadn't seen much love in decades, now there is a community mural, urban garden plots, a dirt bike track, and more. These events illustrate new methods to not only NPS staff, but to its partners, and the



communities NPS engages or hopes to engage. This familiarizes all parties with the principles in action, and makes it more likely that they will adopt these practices in future programs and projects.

LESSONS LEARNED

Leverage Technical Assistance

NPS technical assistance early on in a project can be used to leverage other support and funding. “Getting assistance from community assistance programs like RTCA [Rivers, Trails, and Conservation Assistance] lets other potential funders know the project is supported,” Slaughter advocated. Decentralizing funding sources may seem daunting or inefficient, but even small grants and technical assistance can be leveraged for larger funds, more technical assistance, and new partnerships down the line.

Challenging Organizational Structure

“GS [General Schedule Pay Scale] levels can be meaningless to me, with the approval of my host, I just reached out to folks and asked how they could help,” Slaughter admits. Outreach wasn’t limited to NPS staff at Rosie the Riveter, he added, “It’s important to involve staff at all levels from other national

parks, city park staff, and representatives from the state.” Kieron challenged the chain of command and embraced horizontal management, treating staff, regardless of GS levels, as peers who could help with projects. By finding allies who were willing to activate the principles or relevancy and collaboration at various levels, NPS staff across these levels built relationships connected by the Urban Agenda, thus modeling One NPS.

Encourage Fun, No “Shushing”

Many of the programs activated because of the Urban Agenda relate to building a capable and diverse next generation of national park stewards. Through youth programming, NPS can share its resources and offer many kids opportunities for recreation and education they wouldn’t otherwise have access to. Slaughter stresses that free play is extremely valuable to building this next generation. “Encourage kids to have fun, it’s not a museum! We’re competing with other interactive type venues - amusement parks, science museums, so our spaces when possible should be places that are interactive and fun!”

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR NPS

In continuing to implement the principles of the Urban Agenda, Slaughter advocates that “major initiatives be supported from the top down but they need to be informed and inspired by folks from the ground-up.”

Exposure to initiatives like this cannot be a charge of which only the deputy and superintendent of a park are aware.

Efforts such as the Urban Agenda need to be intentionally introduced to the entire

staff, where questions and discussion can occur. This results in a grass-roots effort to implementation, which in turn strengthens the working relationship among Park Service staff, and between the Park Service and its partners.

Related to the “boots-on-the-ground” employees, “There’s a big missed opportunity when diverse youth work at a local level in city parks but don’t continue with that career path.” It should be common practice to facilitate education for these young interns and volunteers on hiring paths and the sustainability and benefits of seasonal jobs. Kieron adds, “Any kind of education needs to be followed up with mentoring and support--when they are the only one of their kind they need a culture that lends itself to propping up their voice, they need a cohort.”

