

Good morning Commissioners. You'll find the Youth Scholarship information in Binder 8.

My name is Rob Hines, Manager of Development for Fort Wayne Parks and Recreation. Thank you for the opportunity to talk about our Youth Scholarship program.

This program has been available in some form or another since 1991, and has allowed thousands of area children to take part in our programs and classes, when financial concerns may have otherwise prevented it.

The Youth Scholarship program reduces the cost of any single program registration through Fort Wayne Parks and Recreation, based on family income qualifications.

Currently the maximum scholarship amount is \$50 per child in each calendar year.

Since 2012 alone, we have provided over \$103,000 in scholarship funds to program participants. That translates to about 2,060 registrations. But we want to do more.

We know that as costs rise, so do our program fees, and while our programs continue to be a tremendous value, we want to ensure that everyone has a chance to join the fun.

We have seen the amount of scholarship usage decrease somewhat in the past few years.

COVID was certainly a major factor in that decline, but we also are noticing that a \$50 scholarship is just not as much of a benefit as it once was.

Especially when our most popular programs for scholarship users are day camps, which have fees of over \$100/week.

That's why we are proposing an increase to our Youth Scholarship maximum dollar amount from \$50 to up to \$75 for a single registration, per child, per calendar year.

The Youth Scholarship program is entirely donation-based, and we are in a very fortunate position right now thanks to many generous donors, so we have funds available in our Youth Scholarship program that will allow us to make this change in the short term.

Plus, we are connecting with many of our funding partners in the community to keep the momentum going for the future.

In a time when many families are experiencing the stress of keeping up with rising costs, we are thrilled to have the chance to give those families some good news and to make the registration process a little easier.

So today, I am requesting that the board approve this procedure update to increase our Youth Scholarship to up to \$75 per child, for one program registration per calendar year.

I am happy to answer any questions...

## *Policy and Procedure*

<b>Subject: Youth Scholarship program</b>		<b>Page: 1 of 1</b>
<b>Section: C</b> <b>Item: 21</b>	<b>Approved: 1991</b> <b>Revised:</b>	<b>Authority: Department</b>

A. Purpose

The purpose of this policy and procedure is to standardize and clarify the Youth Scholarship program. The Fort Wayne Parks and Recreation Department will offer program scholarships for qualified children as funds are available. These funds are made available through generous donations by individuals and organizations.

B. Policy

B-1 Youth Scholarship recipients must be 18 years of age or younger.

B-2 The participant's family must provide proof of income eligibility. Acceptable forms of proof are limited to:

- A signed letter from the child's school stating that the child qualifies for the free school lunch program AND free textbooks. The letter must be issued within the current school year (August through June) and should contain the child's home address. A photocopy of the letter will be considered sufficient proof.
- In the case of a pre-school child, a copy of the above specified letter identifying a sibling in the applicant's household as eligible will serve as proof.
- If a letter from the school is not available, a copy of the applicant family's most recent U.S. Internal Revenue Service Tax Return form shall qualify as proof.
- The above methods are preferred, but an official letter indicating food stamp status will be accepted.

B-3 Each participant may register for one activity (a class or one week of camp) up to \$75 per calendar year.

B-4 The scholarship may be used for registration fees only. The scholarship cannot be used for Zoo Camps or Zoo programs.

B-5 Scholarship funds cannot be used for late fees.