SOUTH EAST ASSOCIATION FOR SPECIAL PARKS AND RECREATION

Presented By: University of St. Francis Business Research 277A

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SOUTH EAST ASSOCIATION FOR SPECIAL PARKS AND RECREATION
Downers Grove, Illinois

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In December, 2022, The South East Association For Special Parks and Recreation (SEASPAR) located in Downers Grove, Illinois partnered with the University of St. Francis (USF) Business Research course (BSAD 277) to engage in a research project aimed at helping SEASPAR increase productivity by optimizing their website and social media strategy, analyzing marketing efforts and impact, enhancing their volunteerism and fundraising efforts, and examine client feedback to gain insights for use in creating a new strategic plan. The goal is to provide SEASPAR with practical application guided by best practice research to improve overall efficiency and business operations. The University of St. Francis course instructor was Professor Joseph Ferrallo.

The student research team included:

Project Leader - Dr. Joseph Ferrallo, Co Project Manager – Jocelyn Hernandez-Rodriguez, Co-Project Manager – Joseph Costa, and student business consultants, Megan Ramsey, Theron Mitchell, Drew Toke, Holly Helsper, Jacob Karli, Marshall McDonnell, Anthony Suero, Denisse Lizano, Rhyan Ivancicts, and Reanna Vandervelde.

SEASPAR's Mission Statement to serve the community is:

> We are committed to our mission of enriching people's lives through recreation.
>
> Our vision is to enable our participants to discover abilities, achieve potential, and realize dreams. We operate with the core values of fun, friendships, caring, trust, and accountability.
>
> (SEASPAR Mission, 2023)

This project serves the following purposes:

- Fulfills BSAD 277 Business Research course requirement
- Fulfills University of St. Francis service commitment to the community by sharing time, talent, and treasure to develop and strengthen business relationships

- Provides much needed consulting services for local not-for-profit communities
- Provides SEASPAR, Downers Grove, Illinois valuable information to improve long-term business operations by implementing current business best practices

Study Background

In mid - December, 2022 Doctor Joseph Ferrallo in consultation with Matt Corso Executive Director of SEASPAR, developed a memorandum of understanding (MOU) that outlines the specific details University of St. Francis student business consultants will undertake that provide best practice suggestions and recommendations, to improve SEASPAR's overall business performance in the areas of:

A. Website
B. Communication and Social Media
C. Marketing
D. Volunteerism/Fundraising
E. Client Questionnaire

I.A. - Website/Format & Layout

In the modern day, a website is essential to running any size not-for-profit, or for profit business. Websites benefit greatly from continuous updating, critiquing, and perfecting to increase customer satisfaction and interaction. The SEASPAR website was examined by our student consultant team during the course of Winter/Spring seasons, 2023. Student business consultants notice minimal website updates SEASPAR will need to improve form and layout. Several key improvement ideas have emerged.

Upon investigation of SEASPAR's website (www.seaspar.org), in terms of form and layout, student consultants identified a multitude of opportunities that allow for a more appealing user experience. First, research conducted in 2016 suggests that content readability and simplicity is key to improving a user's experience (Garett, Chiu, Zhang, & Young, 2016). Since 2016, SEASPAR has made many improvements to make the SEASPAR

website more user friendly, appealing, and to improve overall user navigation and experience.

Moving forward, best practice suggestions for improvement include incorporating SEASPAR's logo colors into the website. Student business consultants observed there is a lot of red text on the 'Program Information' and the 'Registration' pages. To improve readability on the 'Program Information' page, remove the underlined links to pages in red, and instead make the subtitles a clickable, underlined blue link to direct clients to the specific pages. Blue is a far more appealing, calming color, and easier to read. In addition, the boxed out quotes from SEASPAR parents are also in red. Student business consultants recommend changing the color to a more soothing blue color, similarly used in SEASPAR's logo to make it more appealing. From a medical perspective, red should be avoided because Men in particular, who suffer from color blindness cannot see red, and see red as a gray color (Timo Gnambs, 2015).

Continuing the format and layout discussion, SEASPAR's website is very well organized. Student business consultants recommend adding a homepage tab at the top of SEASPAR's website. We discovered that clicking the SEASPAR logo takes you back to the homepage, along with the site map at the bottom of the website. We surmise that not many people will know that clicking the logo will take them to the original homepage on SEASPAR's website. Perhaps there should be an indicator of that function in some way, either by highlighting in color, or creating a carrot indicator that the logo is clickable.

Additionally, SEASPAR needs to increase its calendar accessibility. Student consultants found it very difficult to reach despite utilizing the SEASPAR search bar. As well as expanding the calendar to mark events that need more volunteers or are available to the Adopt-a-Program option. Further website improvements for potential volunteers and

employees include better incorporating the volunteer application and job listings button under the ‘Ready to Join Our Team?’ heading in the Employment/Volunteer main section. Small red links are currently used when the large bright blue and green buttons should be placed in the main section as the central focus of this tab as most users do not often reach the bottom of a page. The typical scroll rate is 53%, meaning users make it to just over half the page when scrolling (Young, 2022, para. 2). Bold, colorful button links make the application and listings visible and more of an inviting opportunity.

Opportunities for Improvement Summary

- **Use** SEASPAR’s logo colors and incorporate into website
- **Include** a homepage tab at the top of the website
- **Create** a blue color for clickable subtitles on specific pages (where applicable)

I.B. - Website/Function

Our student consultant team analyzed and examined the SEASPAR’s website, www.seaspar.org in terms of its function. A website's function should perform without error, assist customers to choose SEASPAR over alternatives, and allow a website to be easily found by users upon search. Student consultants identified multiple opportunities for improvement to SEASPAR’s website functionality.

First, an opportunity for improvement is to add separate program pages that are specific to children/young teens, and teen/young adults. Instead of having to look at the online brochure, we suggest creating a page/link for parents to look at all the possible programs for those specific client groups. Another possible suggestion would be to clearly define and separate events within their pages to avoid confusion, frustration and website hunting. The information in the brochure should be reflected as easily and accessible as such in the website with more detail.

Another area of concern is the event calendar. The student consultants found it difficult to discover there was one to begin with. Inclusion of a link to the event calendar for past and future events on the main page permits users to understand what SEASPAR does and can do for them as parents/guardians, potential employees or volunteers. This calendar, as it will be mentioned again in the Existing Volunteerism section, could include the ability for sponsors or volunteers to apply for particular events that fall under the sponsorship packages (Bronze, Silver, Gold, and Platinum). Otherwise, a separate tool should be included for sponsors and volunteers.

Another section of the website is the off-site registration. Parents and/or Guardians must rely on the back and forth between the brochure page and the registration page in order to discover what programs to apply for.

Online Registration Concerns:

- **Improve search bar** - Have programs come up as user is typing in number in WebTrac
- **Clearly list registration program numbers** on website as well, rely less on brochure to relay all information to optimize website - brochure should exist for easy skimming
- **Have matching results accurately appear in WebTrac** (when a user clicks pictured links as seen on the site as “For Everyone; Kids; Teens and Adults” it gives no list of options except checking the filter button for the according “For Everyone; Kids; Teens and Adults” - giving the user more work to go back and forth from brochure to WebTrac

Opportunities for Improvement Summary

- **Enable** quicker and easier access to programs by age group
- **Improve** search bar within the registration page
- **Utilize and promote** event calendar for upcoming events
- **Add** a calendar feature to the sponsorship/volunteerism portions

I.C. - Website/Creative Directory of Services

A directory of service provides valuable information about employees, organizations, donations, and other content to share with users as requested or needed. The directory of service is used to map searchers to find necessary information quickly. At present, SEASPAR has a well-organized Directory of Services. The website layout allows easy access to current programs, contains multiple pictures/visuals that portray each service, as well provides an in-depth written description of each service.

Opportunities for Improvement Summary

In terms of focused improvement areas, student business consultants recommend providing testimonials for each service offered. Including testimonials from event participants, families, donors, or volunteers, can help website visitors come to know SEASPAR's community impact. Community impact can help build trust, and encourage more people to participate in programs, or activities, or to encourage community members to engage in volunteer opportunities, or become donors.

Student business consultants also recommend separating the details on the website about adult and children's programming. Currently, SEASPAR includes all program information under the "Programs" tab in the directory. Under program information, there are extended tabs linking users to weekly programs and special events, special olympics,

adapted sports, multi-sensory rooms, etc. SEASPAR would benefit by separating these programs and services into adult and child programs for a multitude of reasons.

The largest benefit of separating the services would lead to improved targeted communication, which provides SEASPAR an opportunity to communicate more effectively. Parents or guardians of children may have different needs or concerns compared to adults with specially-abled abilities. Tailored communication between each group can help ensure users receive the correct and relevant information. Having a clear organizational structure can make it easier for families to navigate each service best suited for their needs. This recommendation is supported by current SEASPAR questionnaire question 14 (“What improvements could be made” …, results included 12 open-ended responses), which suggested creating separation between the current program groups (separate tab for children and adult programs).

Some minor additions that would be beneficial to add to the SEASPAR website include placing social media icons on the top of each page on the website. Icons make finding other media platforms easier and effective. Additionally, adding upcoming events on the homepage would provide relevant information, promote exposure, and grow program attendance.

I.D. - Website/Donor Wall of Thanks

The importance of an effective Donor Wall of Thanks is that it gives recognition to those who have donated their time, talents, and treasure to the success of an organization. Presently, SEASPAR does have a Donor Wall of Thanks. Research indicates that donors like to be recognized and thanked for their contributions in some form (Dietz & Keller, 2016). The current SEASPAR Donor Wall of Thanks is organized in sections based upon when the donations were given. The donors are presented by the name of the donor or organization

that is highlighted at different times of the year. Donors are also listed under the specific event that took place. Each donation section comprises an approximate 3-5-month period.

Based on our research of other organizations, and viewing SEASPAR'S Donor Wall of Thanks, the student business consultants recommend that consistent/timely donors should be recognized individually with a picture and a quote. An example of the website layout that emphasizes this approach is located at www.broadwayinchicago.com . The layout of the Broadway in Chicago website demonstrates recognition and appreciation for their donor partners. Broadway in Chicago also advertises their donor partners, and alerts information seekers about discounts toward specific offers at the donor's business.

Moreover, student business consultants recommend putting logos next to each business who support SEASPAR. The current SEASPAR web page does not have anything that stands out. Each company donation looks the same, and there is no distinction between any of the donors. Making the changes would improve donor personalization and increase SEASPAR recognition.

I. E. - Website/Donations

During the process of conducting research and analyzing SEASPAR's website; student business consultants found the donation tab very easy to use. Student business consultants also observed there were two distinct ways to donate: via website using Debit/credit card or PayPal.

Regarding SEASPAR donations, there are multiple recommendations that student business consultants recommend to help increase donor interest and donations, respectively. The first recommendation includes adding more payment methods. We suggest adding Zelle, Venmo, and/or Cashapp, cash application. These apps are very easy to use and many people have at least one of them. According to Spero Financial (n.d.) "Venmo: 52 million+

users (based on 2020 numbers), Cash App: 30 million users, Zelle: 15.1 million users" (para. 4). Cash Apps are very convenient for each party involved, and you don't have to pay to set them up. These apps can be separate from the actual website so it does not interfere with PayPal. Giving people more options to donate to SEASPAR adds flexibility to the ways donors can donate treasure to SEASPAR.

Chatterjee (2004) indicates that, "2.2 million people made a first-time charitable online donation and 1.9 million indicated a willingness to use this mode again." (p. 5). Online donations are a much more effective way of generating proceeds due to the convenience and accessibility. By providing donors with a well-defined donation description within the donation tab, this will provide SEASPAR with the benefit of receiving even more charitable donations. Student business consultants additionally recommend SEASPAR create opportunities for donors to send donations by mail, such as check, and on the rare occasion, to donate cash to SEASPAR in person. Sending seasonal donation mailer requests to non-SEASPAR community members, not presently donors, could provide another source of revenue for SEASPAR. Mailers are a great way to boost SEASPAR'S presence and community impact to get the community involved.

Finally, some people are nervous to use their credit card information online, even if it's for a good cause. These mail in donations would allow those individuals to still be able to donate. Mercy home for boys & girls send out mail in donations and their letter is very convincing. Here is their website if you wanted to look more into that organization for suggestions https://www.mercyhome.org.

The last suggestion student business consultants have is to create a donation box (similar to a bank after-hours depository), outside of SEASPAR's main office. A donation box gives people another option to donate. According to Aquire (2022), "Donation boxes are a

simple but effective way to raise extra funds. Once they're in place, donation boxes act as a passive fundraising method. If located in the right places, donation boxes (portals) can raise hundreds or even thousands for your organization" (para. 1). The website below provides details about how to set up a donation box, and also provides do's and don'ts about the process too. https://donorbox.org/nonprofit-blog/donation-boxes

F. - Website/Utilization

The website is an important asset to any company's success. A website provides the company with an online presence, making it easier for potential consumers/donors/volunteers to locate and learn more about the business. Having a website is important because consumers can get to know the company and its culture. SEASPAR currently utilizes the Google Business Directory listing. "A directory listing allows consumers to search for businesses by service, location, and category" (Fitzpatrick, 2023). A directory listing allows for a description, hours of operation, pictures, a phone number, and gives people an efficient way to find more information about SEASPAR. Because of the directory, more people are learning about SEASPAR. There are 8 important reasons why a directory listing is important:

1. **Boosts** Online Presence
2. **Provides** Local Visibility
3. **Promotes** Discovery Easily
4. **Provides** more efficient way to get Reviews
5. **Strengthens** Business Reputation
6. **Increases** Brand Awareness
7. **Boosts** Local Search Engine Optimization
8. **Appears** on Google Search

A Google Business Directory helps SEASPAR get more visibility. Because SEASPAR has great reviews, they will get more recognition.,“65 percent of consumers trust online reviews as much as personal recognition” (Fairley, 2019, para. 1). We recommend using Search Engine Optimization (SEO) which is the prime internet wide software engine that organizes which websites appear first in search results (Google, Bing, Yahoo, etc). According to Michigan Technological University, five ways to improve your site’s ranking (on Google search) is to “publish relevant, authoritative content, update content regularly, metadata, have a link-worthy site, and use alt tags” (MTU, 2022, para. 1). SEASPAR can add photos, upcoming events, community partner events, discounts, services offered, or any current events. The additional content will drive more clicks to the website, which then improves Search Engine Optimization (SEO). Student business consultants recommend SEASPAR add a **Frequently Asked Questions** tab that could answer all questions that they have in one place. Although SEASPAR has a 5.0-star rating review, there are only 9 Google reviews.

Student business consultants recommend SEASPAR ask more people to write a review about their experience. Doing this can help increase SEASPAR’S Website Utilization. Research suggests that a business needs a minimum of 5 good ratings, but should have at least 20 Google reviews to engage customers and generate trust (Kirby, 2023).

Website utilization tools are extremely important to help organizations be aware of the traction they are receiving from website visitors. It can also help track when and where website visitors are viewing a website, as well as the types of tabs and links that website visitors click on. This can help give an organization a better understanding and insights into website visitors’ interests, and needs. It can also help an organization work on specific parts of their website that are not gaining enough traction. There are several options to choose from for utilization and analytic website tools. Many of these tools are also free of charge and

have a user-friendly format. In addition to Google Business Directory, SEASPAR might also want to look into using Smartlook as another option.

Currently, SEASPAR does not utilize any analytic or data tools that can help them better understand their current website visitors. This can cause a loss of interest for possible volunteers and donors because they may have specific tendencies while browsing SEASPAR's website, but these tendencies will be completely unknown to SEASPAR. These tendencies may include website visitors acknowledging and utilizing the "**Give"** tab more often than the "**Donate**" button.

With regard to tracking the statistical utilization metrics on the SEASPAR website, there are multiple solutions that are believed to be both reliable and efficient. The first solution recommended is a web based analytic tool. In order to get the best results for utilization, the research team recommends Google Analytics. This is a free utilization tool which will provide SEASPAR with the ability to "analyze your website traffic and measure the effectiveness of your marketing efforts. It can help nonprofits optimize their website to turn their traffic into donations, event registrations, or volunteer applications" (Google Analytics, 2022, para 1). Many for-profit companies such as Uber, Robinhood, and Airbnb currently utilize Google Analytics and enjoy continuing success.

We also suggest using Smartlook. Smartlook is a website analytics software that is free to use. Smartlook is more detailed than Google Analytics. There are various filter options where you can look at visit date, duration, domain visited, number of pages per visit, total visits, city, country, and more. Smartlook will help you be precise with who looks at your website and when. Smartlook also allows you to see immediate signs where the weakest

links are, and notice which steps cause the highest bounce rates (Smartlookteam, 2021). Backlinko.com (2023) defines bounce rates as users who view a web page and leave it without participating on the site.

For example, Smartlook can provide details about when people donate the most and at what time they do. Smartlook also uses retroactive/historical data to create actionable insights. This allows people to look back at data from prior years and see the sales difference or the number of people who joined. When anomalies happen, Smartlook will also notify you. Examples would be: no one is looking at your website, a lot of people are donating or looking at a certain time. The Smartlook plan offers a 14-day free trial offer, with up to 3000 session limits within the free 14-day trial plan. Smartlook supports mobile apps and website use, and it integrates with important business apps, such as Google Analytics, Google Tag Manager, WordPress, Intercom, Mixanel, Zendesk, and others.

The student research team also recommends updating the current Google Business Profile as frequently as you can. This is another free benefit that can assist SEASPAR in finding new donors and volunteers. Although Google Business Profile is currently being utilized by SEASPAR, it is important to update the photos presented on the business profile and encourage volunteers to leave written reviews and questions. Overall, this will help with gaining traction and interest on the current website.

II.A. - Communication and Social Media Plan/Presence & Platform

Improving a social media presence can help SEASPAR connect more with users, raise awareness about their mission, and promote events and programs. Below are the recommendations for SEASPAR to improve their online presence.

SEASPAR can improve their social media footprint by posting on all social media platforms as much as possible to get the most exposure and maximize donations. Social media helps you to build your brand, showcase your impact and attract new donors and volunteers. Also, a suggestion is to be on the lookout for emerging social media platforms that start to gain media attention and attract followers quickly. It is recommended SEASPAR embrace the new platforms with posts to attract new followers and exposure. TikTok is currently the fastest growing social media platform in the United States, with about 80 million monthly active users (Lin, 2021). Creating a TikTok account as well as a Twitch account to embrace that audience would be well-suited for SEASPAR looking to attract a wider audience.

We recommend SEASPAR engage with more followers and ask for feedback. Social Media is a two-way conversation. SEASPAR should respond to comments and messages and ask for feedback when applicable. Asking for feedback shows followers that their input is valued. This also helps build a stronger sense of community around SEASPAR's social media presence. Another suggestion is to partner with online influencers and partners. Collaborating with influencers in the community can help SEASPAR reach a wider audience. We recommend SEASPAR also create a social media strategy. SEASPAR should create a social media strategy that clearly outlines their goals, objectives, and tactics for each platform they use. This strategy should also include a content plan that details what type of content should be posted, how often, and which platform to post on.

II.B. - Communications and Social Media Plan/Posting Frequency

This section will discuss social media posting frequency for SEASPAR social media platforms that examine when, what, and how often SEASPAR is posting. An effective integrated marketing communication plan should include a distinct subsection to social media

planning and use. Also, examination of social media Hashtag use and exploration will be provided.

Student business consultants look for a myriad of details to help determine whether SEASPAR is utilizing and maximizing potential social media exposure opportunities. Connecting with others should be the requisite goal of SEASPAR's social media plan. Effective social media planning and execution create opportunities for SEASPAR to engage members, create effective volunteer or event program partnerships, and encourage new donor engagement.

Social media is crucial for nonprofit organizations because it "allows organizations with limited budgets to reach a larger audience in a fast and cost-effective way. Social media platforms allow organizations to tell their story. Messages can help engage supporters, increase brand awareness and fundraising initiatives" (Haddad, 2020, para. 3). Nonprofit organizations generally have smaller budgets and cannot afford costly marketing campaigns or tools. Hence the importance and need for an effective social media plan and strategy use.

Currently SEASPAR holds a presence on five social media platforms: Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Flickr, and YouTube. However, SEASPAR's posting frequency is infrequent, and has limited presence. When SEASPAR does post messages it consists of pictures of recent events. The most active social media platform used is Facebook, averaging about 1-2 posts daily.

Some suggestions to improve the use of Facebook is to start sending out e-invitations on Facebook. The invitations on Facebook lets people know that they were invited to an event. Facebook also has a feature that sends reminders that the event is coming up.

SEASPSAR's usage on Instagram and Twitter is inconsistent. There are more posts around holidays on the Instagram account and not a lot of posts for weekly events. We recommend posting more weekly events on Instagram and Twitter to keep followers engaged.

The least active SEASPAR social media account is YouTube. We recommend posting short clips from past events related to the upcoming event to add promotion and awareness to the event. This also brings exposure to SEASPAR in a positive way.

In the future, we recommend SEASPAR should increase their posting frequency across all platforms (Instagram, Facebook, Twitter, YouTube) to at least 3 times per week. This will allow people to see SEASPAR posts more frequently and they will be more likely to look into SEASPAR and create a memorable marketing impression thus leading to increased donations and overall exposure.

We additionally recommend SEASPAR insert photos to showcase to community members, board of directors, and other visitors. We believe that if people are able to see firsthand the impact SEASPAR makes on the greater DuPage County community, the more people will believe in the cause and join, follow, and donate to the organization.

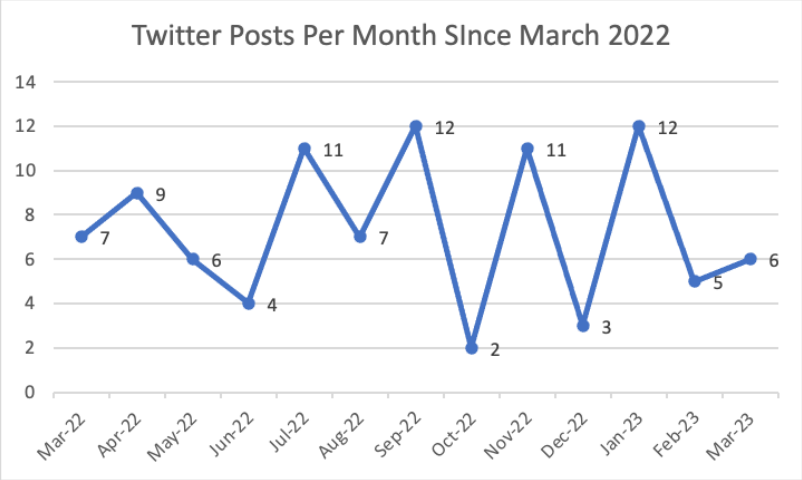
II.C. - Communications and Social Media Plan/When to Post

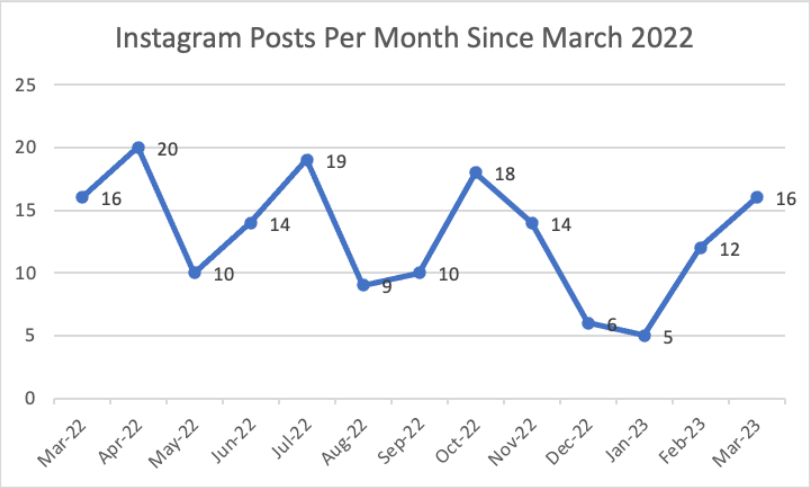
Currently, posting for the benefit of creating the largest amount of interaction or viewing is the best way for any nonprofit to market their mission, events, programs, donors, fundraisers, volunteers, etc. It is important to note the times when certain apps have the greatest engagement. Based on the posting frequency information gathered, SEASPAR has most recently utilized posting on Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, Flickr and YouTube.

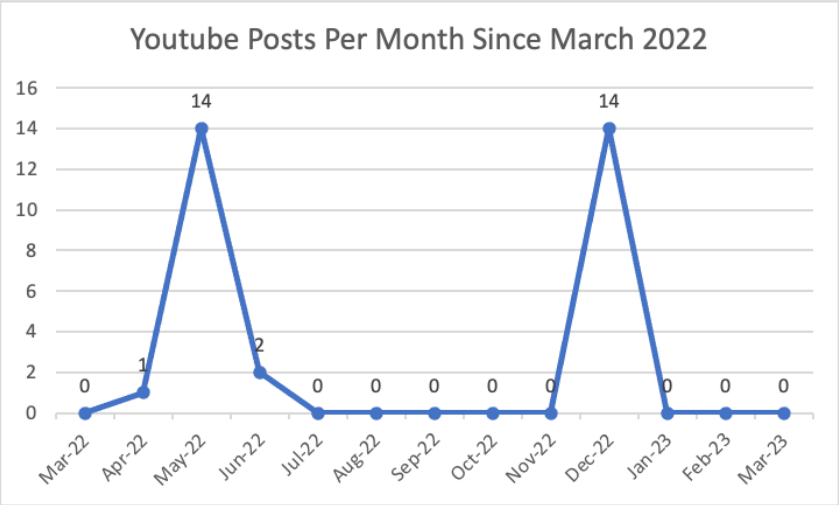
However, SEASPAR publishes on social media at an inconsistent rate across all platforms. Data was taken from Twitter, Instagram and YouTube going as far back as March

of 2022 to track post quantity. Looking at historical posts graphically, Twitter showed jagged peaks where for example from September of 2022 to October of 2022, SEASPAR went from twelve to two posts. As well as November to December where SEASPAR tweeted eleven times and then only posted three times the following month. Instagram is similar in the graph's peaks going from nineteen posts in July of 2022 to nine posts in August; however, some of this inconsistency is compensated by high content density. Even more so than Instagram, Flickr exceeds in high density content. A multitude of photos are shared from events, many which can be better shared on social media to fulfill consistency goals.

YouTube is the most lacking social media account where SEASPAR had posted only four times within the year. Two of those times, May of 2022 and December of 2022, were high in concentration, having posted fourteen times both times but with a gap of five months with no videos. Additionally, SEASPAR currently has no Tiktok, the current leading social media platform known for its abilities to garner exposure, or Twitch, a streaming platform.







After conducting research, we found some of the best times to post on social media platforms, which we recommend to be beneficial to SEASPAR to grow their social media presence.

- **Facebook**

Best day: Tuesdays through Saturday

Best times: Monday through Fridays early mornings, Tuesdays at 10 a.m. and noon

Worst day: Sundays

Worst Times: 6am to 9am; 9pm to 12am

- **Instagram**:

Best day(s): Tuesdays and Wednesdays

Best times: Mondays at 11 a.m., Tuesdays and Wednesdays from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m., and Thursdays and Fridays 10 a.m. and 11 a.m.

Worst day: Sunday

- **Twitter:**

Best day(s): Tuesdays and Wednesdays

Best times: Monday through Saturday from 9am to 12pm

Worst Times: Before 9am

Worst day: Sunday

- **Flickr:**

Best day(s): Tuesdays, Wednesdays, and Thursdays

Best times: Tuesday 7am to noon; 5pm to 7pm

Worst day: Saturdays and Sundays

- **YouTube:**

Best day(s): It's recommended to analyze what days your audience engages the most; YouTube audience might vary depending on the content.

Best times: Between 12-9 p.m. on Fridays, Saturdays, and Sundays

Worst times: 6 a.m. to noon., 9 p.m. to 12 a.m.

- **TikTok:**

Best Time(s): Mondays at 6am to 10am; Thursdays at 9am-12pm or at 7pm; Fridays at 1pm to 3pm; Saturday at 11am or at 7pm to 8pm; Sundays at 7am to 8am or at 4pm

Best Day(s): Thursdays, Fridays, Saturdays

Worst Day(s): Mondays, Tuesdays, Wednesdays

An additional recommendation to manage posting across multiple social media sites would be to take advantage of the features within the software application, Hootsuite. Hootsuite software allows users to "Manage all of your company's social networks in one convenient dashboard, and get a bird's-eye view of what's happening in your social world" (Hootsuite, 2022, para. 7). Essentially, SEASPAR can set up given times to post based on

the suggested times to post for each app. This would streamline posting capability as it would no longer be necessary to go into each app separately and post. Hootsuite coordinates posting to multiple platforms at previously set up days and scheduled times. Additionally, Hootsuite offers a thirty-day free trial in order to see the performance reached as a result of the utilization of the app. After the thirty-day free trial, payment options can be chosen based on the analytic and posting needs/desires of the organization. Overall, this will help to organize posting times along with helping to attract the greatest audience and their activity times.

II.D. - Communications and Social Media Plan/Hashtag Creation

Businesses that include hashtags when posting on social media create broader post visibility. By attaching targeted hashtags to posts, individuals have the ability to more readily find social media posts, posted by SEASPAR. Based on the information gathered on the social media platforms currently in use by SEASPAR, hashtags such as #SEASPAR, #TeamSEASPAR, or #WeAreSEASPAR are iconic hashtags that are already used frequently with success. In addition, SEASPAR has exclusive trademark use of the hashtag **#Exclusivelyinclusive**. Student consultants have also observed that some SEASPAR posts do not include any hashtags. This was commonly observed through Twitter use. We recommend using hashtags on every single post, on every social media platform (except YouTube). More frequent and consistent hashtag use brings broader awareness to SEASPAR.

We recommend using the following hashtags on a consistent basis, when posting items related to specific SEASPAR functions. For example, if SEASPAR is posting about its mission, then SEASPAR should use the hashtag #SEASPARBeExtraordinary. All posts will

then have a consistent theme relating to the given hashtag. Additionally, they are more easily searchable too. Targeted hashtags are important in order to keep an online audience in the loop. Hootsuite.com (2022) says that using a few popular hashtags can be another way to help new users find your brand, and further help find your target audience.

To improve engagement on all social media platforms, posts should always include a custom targeted SEASPAR hashtag that relates to a specific SEASPAR event/topic. The corresponding targeted hashtags should also always be included in order to gain maximum exposure and engagement. Utilization of targeted hashtags will ensure appropriate postings that attract the desired audience. Newly created SEASPAR targeted hashtags are listed below. We recommend targeted hashtags as a direct way to lead guests/clients/donors to SEASPAR's website directly from social media. We also observe that current in-use hashtags are not being used consistently in all SEASPAR posts. We recommend using the current SEASPAR hashtags in every single social media post as well. Hashtag use on every social media post will increase awareness to SEASPAR.

SEASPAR Event	New Appropriate Hashtag
Mission	#SEASPARBeExtraordinary/ SEASPARLoveWhatYouDo
Events	#SEASPARSupports/#SEASPAREvents
Fundraisers	#SEASPARFunds/#SEASPARHelp
Donations	#SEASPARDonor/#BeTheChange
Volunteers	#SEASPARVolunteers
SEASPAR hashtag	#SEASPARProud/#SEASPARStrong

III.A. - Marketing/Calendar

SEASPAR offers an array of events, and programming to support community members and partners. With the current giving opportunities such as sporting events and festivals, it is important for participants to be knowledgeable of the upcoming events so they will be able to attend.

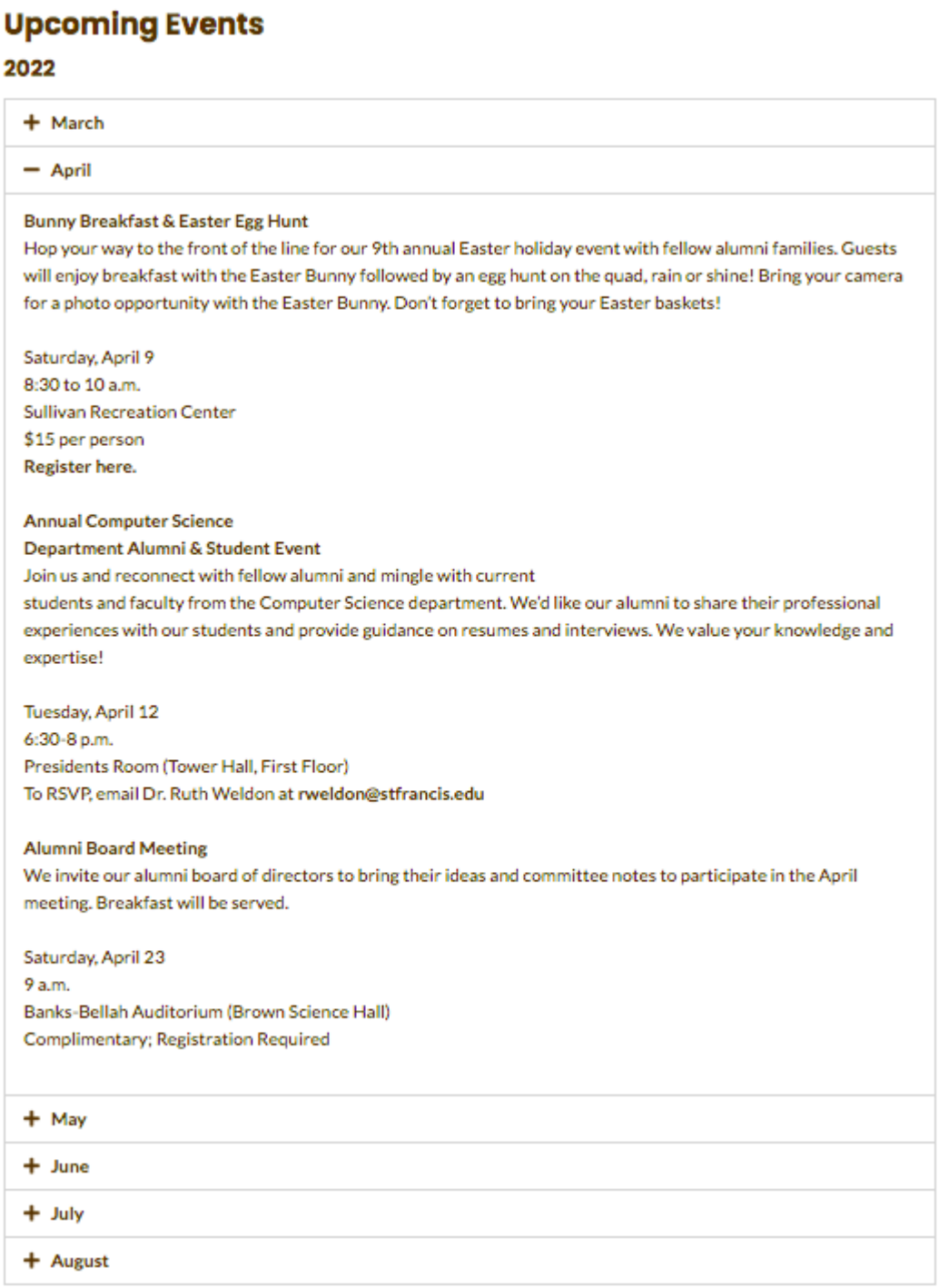
To showcase and increase event attendance, a marketing calendar is a necessity for a business so website visitors can locate events, programs, and information efficiently. After the reconstruction of the SEASPAR website in 2018, an event calendar was created, but has not been utilized since December, 2021.

Having an events calendar on the SEASPAR website helps SEASPAR promote events that benefit SEASPAR. This also helps advance Search Engine Optimization (SEO) improvement from a website utilization perspective. Publishing future events, draws visitors to the website to see what events SEASPAR is promoting. SEASPAR should also consider publishing a “save the date” date about upcoming events, as well as “save the date” date published on social media posts, that refer the social media post receiver to sign into the SEASPAR website - events calendar to get more details.

The sample calendar is the “monthly view” of SEASPAR’s events during the month of November, 2021. The calendar has many good qualities that make it easy to navigate. The calendar also provides weekly or monthly views. Viewing the calendar by weekly or monthly views provides many perks, one being a description of an event taking place on a specific day.

Source: https://www.seaspar.org/calendar/

The second example is an “upcoming event” calendar from the Alumni and Family Relations Office at the University of St. Francis. Each semester, events are planned month by month where alumni, students, and community members can view, and register for events directly from the calendar. This helps the Alumni office stay organized and keep university alumni engaged. An event breakdown is a necessity for all businesses especially SEASPAR, since serving the community is its core mission.



Upcoming Events

2022

+ March

− April

Bunny Breakfast & Easter Egg Hunt
Hop your way to the front of the line for our 9th annual Easter holiday event with fellow alumni families. Guests will enjoy breakfast with the Easter Bunny followed by an egg hunt on the quad, rain or shine! Bring your camera for a photo opportunity with the Easter Bunny. Don't forget to bring your Easter baskets!

Saturday, April 9
8:30 to 10 a.m.
Sullivan Recreation Center
$15 per person
Register here.

Annual Computer Science Department Alumni & Student Event
Join us and reconnect with fellow alumni and mingle with current students and faculty from the Computer Science department. We'd like our alumni to share their professional experiences with our students and provide guidance on resumes and interviews. We value your knowledge and expertise!

Tuesday, April 12
6:30-8 p.m.
Presidents Room (Tower Hall, First Floor)
To RSVP, email Dr. Ruth Weldon at **rweldon@stfrancis.edu**

Alumni Board Meeting
We invite our alumni board of directors to bring their ideas and committee notes to participate in the April meeting. Breakfast will be served.

Saturday, April 23
9 a.m.
Banks-Bellah Auditorium (Brown Science Hall)
Complimentary; Registration Required

+ May

+ June

+ July

+ August

Source: https://www.stfrancis.edu/alumni/events/

We suggest SEASPAR increase use of their events calendar, and keep it up to date. If SEASPAR is looking for a new style for a calendar of events, the latter example has a style that is user friendly and informative.

III.B. - Marketing/Mission Video

SEASPAR has developed a powerful mission for its agency and the important participant community it serves; those with specially abled abilities. SEASPAR is committed to the mission of enriching people's lives through recreation. SEASPAR also has a vision to enable their participants to discover abilities, achieve potential, and realize dreams. To promote SEASPAR's mission using social media, we recommend SEASPAR create a video that promotes its mission. The purpose of the video is to increase SEASPAR exposure, and increase volunteerism and fundraising, aimed at supporting SEASPAR's mission. Creating a mission video would widen SEASPAR's visibility, and increase donations..

The University of St. Francis Student Research team has identified a common theme in similar agencies that depend on donations from the general public. Heifer International is a certified 501(c)(3) nonprofit charity registered in the U.S. under EIN: 35-1019477. Heifer International is an organization that works to end world hunger and poverty. Volunteers go to impoverished countries to donate food, time, and other resources in the fight against hunger and poverty. Heifer International published a video on February 12th, 2014 titled "What We Do." Heifer International – What We Do

The Heifer International video serves as a model to provide a connection between Heifer International and the general public. The video combines company information and background, emotional appeal, and a call to action. The USF Student Research team recommends SEASPAR create a mission/welcome video that promotes SEASPAR, and creates an emotional appeal, and a call to action (Donate time, talent, or treasure).

Mission Video Script:

To assist SEASPAR in producing the mission video, The University of St. Francis Audio & Visual clubs are excellent and reputable resource that the Student research team

would like to extend to SEASPAR. Glen Gummess is the contact person for the Video club and Anthony Musiala is the contact person for the Audio club. They can be reached at 815-740-3696.

Detailed below is the recommended SEASPAR mission video script content, which is short, directed, and creates a call to action. The script detail can also be found in Appendix E.

> "According to the Centers of Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) in 2022, there are 57.8 million people living in the U.S. with an emotional or physical specially-abled ability. Downers Grove, Illinois based South East Association for Special Parks And Recreation (SEASPAR), is committed to enriching the lives of those in need through recreation in twelve local communities throughout northeast Illinois. SEASPAR believes that together, we can transform the lives of our participants with our core values of fun, friendship, caring, trust and accountability. For more information about SEASPAR, please visit www.seaspar.org. We thank you for your generous spirit to help those with specially abled abilities, live an "exclusively inclusive"™ life."

IV.A. – Existing Volunteerism/Suggestions for Volunteerism

Most of the core group of general volunteers that help SEASPAR are within the community. Through observation and research, we found that volunteers are an important factor to the organization's continued success as they are described as "indispensable" when entering the "Employment/Volunteer" tab in the navigation bar. The website's volunteer form is made simple to encourage application, only requiring a full name, email and phone number. According to a study by the Society of Human Resource Management, sixty percent of applicants abandon online applications because of length and complexity (Zielinski, 2016, p. 1). Reducing the process to three minutes or less maximizes volunteer attraction as the

responsibilities are similar to an employed staff member and create a sense of formality to a position that does not demand formal experience. Applications submitted which are not quickly accepted are then saved for up to one year until a position is made available.

Volunteers are offered flexibility, the option to take on different positions moving forward, with no formal experience necessary, and the opportunity to adopt a program. One of the many praiseworthy qualities of the volunteer section is the Adopt-a-Program. This alternative allows schools, groups, and service clubs to adopt a program and commit to providing volunteers for either a weekly program or for a specific event to aid running and interacting with those involved. A tool or page is worth recommending to promote the adopt-a-program option which otherwise is not made obvious. This tool would ideally have the group fill out an application with the appropriate background information and have a call follow up for further details and introduction. The organization/group may be more well prepared than simply calling first and require additional calls back. It is also recommended a calendar be created, as previously mentioned before, or a lineup of future events a group or volunteer can apply for with a link to the sponsorship option if said group/organization would like to provide funds allowing the sponsorship opportunity more exposure.

It is recorded in the SEASPAR 2021 annual report that there were forty-five volunteers; that number is presently eighty. An emphasis on accumulating volunteers, expanding the website channels for volunteers will allow for a decrease in the dependency of staff members and open opportunities for lasting volunteer partnerships and relationships.

Opportunities for Improvement Summary

University of St. Francis student consultants recommend several possibilities for new volunteer sources. Student Consultants recommend emphasizing the Adopt-a-Program feature which is currently well-hidden in the website. The option is unseen, underdeveloped,

and requires a phone call to apply, deterring more service clubs/groups/organizations from applying. Supplying a tool or calendar for service clubs/organizations/groups to view and fill out without having to wait for a call, while simultaneously providing information with what groups need to prepare with, will arouse more awareness and higher volumes of volunteers throughout the year.

A plentiful source for SEASPAR to recruit more volunteers is through local community colleges as well as high schools looking for service requirements. College students are also often in search of internships, and preparing service-based internship opportunities allows the students access to receive developmental skill experience, opportunities for creativity and problem-solving skills. Most internships take place in fall, spring or summer semesters. Year-round internships mean continuous organizational developmental opportunities. An example would be to recruit collegiate athletes, reaching out to teams which require service hours, or specific service clubs to volunteer. Or provide internships to Special Needs Education majors for additional hands and in turn experience for the students.

Another option would be to diversify internships by recruit marketing students on top of Special Needs/Education/Recreation majors who are looking for service-based internships where students can help with the social media aspect to bring more awareness to SEASPAR'S community's charity events, or finance and business majors to assist in budgeting and funding.

We also recommend SEASPAR form partnerships with corporate and small business partners to solicit volunteers. Companies that we found which are not limited to corporate partnerships are Culver's, Chipotle and Goodwill Industries. Most of these corporate partners allow people to host events for charities and receive a fixed percentage of donations based on daily proceeds. Or another example is Chipotle or Burger King has allowed schools

nearest the location to earn a percentage of profits if friends, family and others go on a certain set day and if they mention the school charity at the register.

IV.B. – Existing Fundraising/Suggestions for Fundraising

Existing Fundraising

Fundraising is a way to seek support for SEASPAR and their cause. SEASPAR's current fundraising structure is mostly online. Due to Covid-19, SEASPAR no longer has any events such as the Gala or other big in person events, as the time/cost to prepare the event did not provide a large enough return on investment. SEASPAR also solicits online donations through Double Goods Popcorn, where they receive 50 percent of compensation. Double Goods Popcorn is a business for fundraising through schools, programs, teams etc. The Pop-Up store is a completely online fundraiser that is open for 4 days where people can donate money for the cause and receive bags of popcorn in return. The popcorn is shipped to people and requires minimal effort for SEASPAR.

There are regular donations to SEASPAR received from participants and their families. SEASPAR, too, has a partnership with Giving DuPage. Giving DuPage is a virtual community fundraiser that is a five-day event in the entire county. People come together and spread messages about hope to the community. During May 2nd - 6th, the employees connect individuals, families, businesses, schools and communities to celebrate and create awareness for participating charities. Giving DuPage allows SEASPAR to receive support and awareness.

Lastly, one of the newest fundraising opportunities is virtual Bingo. Because of the pandemic, people were not able to come for in-person events. SEASPAR developed a way for the participants to have fun at home through virtual Bingo. SEAPSAR was able to give

people a fun game night with virtual bingo, and it is still a success! SEASPAR also currently applies for grants from a variety of sources to support operations.

Opportunities for Improvement Summary

A new fundraising idea would be to expand into local fairs and festivals. Student business consultants found that there is already a DuPage County Fair with live music. SEASPAR should explore the possibility of partnering with the DuPage County fair to see if donation percentages could be shared with local not-for-profits. Another suggestion would be to see if SEASPAR could host a booth at the fair, selling t-shirts to raise money.

SEASPAR can also expand with possible fund-raising events at local restaurants to help get percentages of proceeds from sales. For example, Culver's would be a successful corporate partner for SEASPAR since they allow fundraising events in their community to provide a percentage of profits to the partner organization.

IV.C. – Volunteerism and Fundraising/Suggestions for Fundraising

As mentioned by Executive Director Matt Corso, SEASPAR's main revenue focus has been through online donations and fundraising. Due to COVID's impact these methods have produced positive results with decreased fundraising costs for SEASPAR. Current volunteer solicitation is also mostly accessed online through SEASPAR's website.

Providing a donation or volunteering avenue to pursue for potential volunteers and donors encourages people to act. In the following section, we will discuss the potential fundraising/volunteer recommendations that may work best for SEASPAR.

We have multiple recommendations for both virtual and in person fundraising ideas. First, we are going to go over our suggestions for virtual fundraising ideas.

Virtual Fundraising

Our first fundraising recommendation would be to consider virtual restaurant fundraisers. They are easy to set up and a great way to bring in money. This also would be little to no work for SEASPAR. Here is the website that will take you directly to GroupRaise. All you have to do is pick a restaurant, date, and location. Then it's all about spreading the word on social media.

https://www.groupraise.com/?ads_cmpid=746510398&ads_adid=39975162675&ads_matchtype=b&ads_network=g&ads_creative=217235659092&utm_term=restaurant%20fundraiser&ads_targetid=kwd-299574661899&utm_campaign=&utm_source=google&utm_medium=cpc&ttv=2&gclid=Cj0KCQiAutyfBhCMARIsAMgcRJSU7LeTwSiNrjcpTOiLTERV_isUs72pRd34HEARbe4knJiB94SmkPYaAt2pEALw_wcB

Our second fundraising recommendation would be virtual walkathons. We believe a virtual walkathon would be a good way to raise money virtually. A virtual walkathon can have sponsors for those participating and also doesn't take as much away from activity/exercise that certain donors or volunteers may be looking for.

Our next suggestion would be video game live streamed tournaments. Streaming apps such as Twitch are very popular and gained a lot of ground after Covid. We believe streaming SEASPAR clients playing tournaments in games such as Rocket League, which Matt Corso said was a popular game among SEASPAR clients. We believe this would be a new and exciting event for SEASPAR to raise money as well as plenty of fun for those involved in the tournaments.

The last virtual fundraising method we recommend would be a virtual game night/trivia night. Donors can pay small fees to answer trivia questions factored around SEASPAR. Winners can receive prizes such as gift certificates. Attendees can also set up virtual

fundraising pages to gain sponsors. Trivia nights can also have different themes. A Harry Potter trivia night or a Greek Mythology trivia can be a good way for attendees to show their knowledge of their favorite genres. Virtual game nights can be classic board games such as Monopoly or Sorry. And card games like Uno can be just as fun. We suggest these ideas as we believe they can be a fun and affordable way to give back to the SEASPAR community. Using a hashtag like #SEASPARFunds or #SEASPARHelp can be a great way to bring awareness to the virtual fundraiser.

In-Person Fundraising

Another recommendation for SEASPAR would be in-person events that bring the community together. Our first suggestion would be a golf outing. We believe SEASPAR can solicit event sponsors for a golf outing, then SEASPAR won't have to do as much work to set up the event, and receive more fundraising monies as a result.

As we suggested a virtual walkathon, we also suggested an in-person one. As an example, Apraxia, which is a neurological disorder, does a walkathon every year. It is super easy to set up and they sell t-shirts that attendees have to purchase in order to participate in the walkathon. We believe that if SEASPAR set up a walkathon in this manner it will find success in fundraising and satisfaction among the clients/volunteers.

Bake sales could be another good fundraising idea, especially during holiday seasons. SEASPAR could solicit specific church groups to bake and donate sweet treats, as well as sell the baked goods at an event SEASPAR could use for fundraising.

Another idea is to send fundraising letters which are a cost-efficient way to raise money through a personalized message. As these are somewhat already occurring through SEASPAR, we believe they can be sent to a larger audience in order to bring more awareness.

Another often overlooked fundraising suggestion is car washes that can be a great way to get a chore off of someone's to-do-list and raise money in the process. Fundraisingzone.com (2023) says that car washes are a proven money maker because almost everyone in the community will want to help, and that everyone needs a good car wash once in a while.

Another suggestion for in-person fundraising would be to host a Movie night at a local park, selling tickets and snacks to receive donations.

Our final fundraising recommendation would be to engage in local business fundraising, a good way to bring recognition to local businesses and doesn't include heavy involvement, but can bring in much needed donations for SEASPAR. SEASPAR can achieve this by soliciting the business to supply discount coupons for the business, and the business then sharing part of their proceeds with SEASPAR. Ideas include restaurants, flower shops, or batting cages. It is a method that can raise needed money for SEASPAR.

V. – Questionnaire Team

The last time SEASPAR asked for client feedback was in 2017, and in 2023, SEASPAR is again soliciting client feedback as a way to develop a new five-year strategic plan. SEASPAR conducted a questionnaire with their clients to determine how well they are meeting client needs. Client data was collected between February 22, 2023 and March 10, 2023. The Questionnaire was created using Google Forms, and was emailed to SEASPAR households on February 22, 2023. Survey analysis was completed in March/April, 2023 by the University of St. Francis, Joliet, Illinois.

Questionnaire responses were anonymous, and participation was completely voluntary. The analysis explained in this report includes compilation of data, open ended comments and cross tabulation of data to identify trends.

507 participants were sent the online questionnaire. There were 237 numbers of responses resulting in an overall response rate of 47%.

The survey questions were categorized into three general areas:

(1) Marketing

(2) Fundraising

(3) Operations

Highlights of the survey data include:

- Breakdown of program participants by age, location, and gender
- Areas for opportunity and growth
- Suggestions for improvement derived from data received

The following report outlines a narrative analysis of significant factors; visual results detailing percentages and tabulation of results; cross tabulation analysis of key correlations; and the listing of all open-ended comments received by the research team.

METHODOLOGY

Survey Description:

Surveys are quantitative research. A survey seeks to gather people's ideas, thoughts, opinions and experiences, and then statistically calculates results by measuring their responses to a set of questions. A quantitative survey draws a sample from a population and uses those findings to demonstrate the views of the population as a whole. For the purposes of this project, SEASPAR is using a qualitative questionnaire which allows SEASPAR the opportunity to gather client's ideas, thoughts, opinions, and experiences, and then through data analysis, devise common themes for questionnaire responses, that will assist SEASPAR with strategic planning.

Participants Sample Selection:

The population was defined as all clients serviced by SEASPAR. Currently, 507 client households received the questionnaire via email to their family email address. Informed consent was provided to all questionnaire recipients, and it invited anyone 18 years or older to participate in completing the questionnaire. All responses are confidential and anonymous. Data is being collected and analyzed by University of St. Francis, Joliet, Illinois.

Data Collection:

The primary medium for data collection was online through Google Forms. Google Forms is amongst the world's leading providers for web-based questionnaires/data collection. Participants were able to complete the questionnaire via clicking on the given link and filling out the given fields that were developed by Dr. Joseph Ferrallo and University of St. Francis student consultants. Data retrieved from Google Forms was analyzed by University of St. Francis student consultants.

Instrument:

A sample questionnaire survey instrument was provided to the research team by the Professor Ferrallo. The questionnaire was customized and developed incorporating input from Matt Corso, SEASPAR Executive Director. The questionnaire instrument was approved on December 28, 2022.

The survey questions were categorized in four general areas:

(1) Participants

(2) Marketing

(3) Transportation

(4) Programming

Measurement Scales

Survey data was input into a web-based data collection instrument using Google Forms. In addition to standard numeric analysis of each question, cross tabulations were calculated.

RESULTS - RESPONSE RATE

Response Rate:

- A total of 507 emails were given the Google Forms link to be completed
- A total of 237 responses were received by the research team
- A total of 235 were considered in the statistical representation of data as these were received from verified households within the sample
- The total response rate was 235/507 (48%)
- Compared to April 2017, an improvement in 20 basis points response rates was noted between both questionnaires (web and USPS)

RESULTS - NARRATIVE ANALYSIS:

Demographics

In compliance with the guidelines of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Office for Human Research Protections, all respondents needed to certify they were at least 18 years of age or older in order to participate in the questionnaire. The communities in which the respondents reside include the park districts of Clarendon Hills, Darien, Downers Grove, La Grange, La Grange Park, Lemont, Lisle, Westmont, and Woodridge, and the villages of Brookfield, Indian Head Park, and Western Springs, all located in the State of Illinois. The summary data from the email (Web) Questionnaire determined that the top 5 SEASPAR cities that participants reside in are Downers Grove, Lisle, Western Springs, La Grange, and Woodridge. Of the responses 70.9% were male and

29.1% were female. In April 2017, 68.4% were male respondents through the Web questionnaire and 56.7% were mail from the U.S. Mail respondents. 31.6% of Web respondents were female and 43.3% of U.S. Mail respondents were female.

Age: What is the SEASPAR program participant's age?

- 98.7% of respondents answered this question
- The options for this question included the ranges of 2-5 years old, 6-15 years old, 16-21 years old, 22-45 years old, and 46 years and older
- 2-5 years old: 3.4%
- 6-15 years old: 21.8%
- 16-21 years old: 14.5%
- 22-45 years old: 52.1%
- 46 years and older 8.1%

Participant's Disability/ Disability (Check all that apply)

- 99.2% of respondents answered this question
- Amongst the top categories included:
  - Autism: 50.6%
  - Developmentally Delayed: 26.8%
  - Intellectual Disability: 24.7%
  - Learning Disability: 16.2%
  - Down Syndrome: 15.7%
  - Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder: 11.1%
  - Attention Deficit Disorder: 10.2%

Knowing this information, SEASPAR could expand on programming opportunities that target participants who could benefit from specific programs.

How did you hear about or become aware of SEASPAR? (Check all that apply)

- 98.7% of respondents answered this question (232/235).
  - An increase in 16 percentage points from 2017 questionnaire
- Top responses for this question include:
  - Park district/Parks and recreation department: 40.9%
  - Word of mouth (Family/Friend/Neighbor): 23.7%
  - Referral by teacher/school: 21.6%
  - Do not recall: 13.8%
  - School Program/Classroom visit: 11.6%

Opportunities that we believe can help increase SEASPAR's awareness would be through social media as only 0.4% of respondents answered Social Media. Another opportunity would be through local high schools and doctors/therapists. We see this as an opportunity to reach out to many more potential participants due to the potential high volume of referrals from high schools and doctors/therapists.

From the following list, please choose the programs in which you have interest. (Check all that apply)

- 100% of the respondents answered this question. (235/235)
  - An increase in 18 percentage points from 2017
- Top responses include:
  - Social Opportunities: 53.2% (125 chose this response)
  - Adult Day Programs: 45.5% (107 chose this response)
  - Special Olympics: 42.1% (99 chose this response)
  - Fitness & Holiday Themed Events: 37.4% (88 chose this for both responses)
  - Movie: 31.9% (75 chose this response)
  - Dance: 28.9% (68 chose this response)
  - Cooking: 26.8% (63 chose this response)

Within the multitude of choices provided to the respondents there are still many other programs that were still chosen but not provided in this report that should be considered in SEASPAR programs.

Please identify any barriers that affect SEASPAR program participation. (Check all that apply)

- 74.4% of respondents answered this question
- Top categories included:
  - Limited personal budget: 27.4%
  - Program(s) are full and participant is placed on waitlist: 26.3%
  - Location of Programs are inconvenient: 24%
  - Desired programs are not offered: 24%
  - Program days or times do not work with my schedule: 23.4%

With a multitude of shared responses for this question. SEASPAR should consider learning how they can possibly help the participants with these barriers, giving all participants the opportunity to participate as much as possible.

Participation

Which day of the week is most convenient to participate in a SEASPAR program?

- 96.5% of the respondents answered this question
  - An increase in 17 percentage points compared to 2017 questionnaire
- Saturday: 72.7% (165)
- Wednesday: 57.3% (130)
- Friday: 56.8% (129)
- Thursday: 56.8% (129)
- Tuesday: 54.2% (123)
- Sunday: 52.4% (119)
- Monday: 49.3% (112)

We believe that programs scheduled later in the week works best with SEASPAR participants. Overwhelmingly, Saturday is the most popular among the days of the week for programs.

Which time of day is most convenient to participate in a SEASPAR program? (Check all that apply)

- 23.53% of the respondents answered this question
- Morning - 8:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.
  - Winter / Spring: 59 chose this response
  - Summer: 100 chose this response
  - Fall: 59 chose this response
- Afternoon - 12:00 p.m. - 5:00 p.m.
  - Winter/Spring: 113 chose this response
  - Summer: 151 chose this response
  - Fall: 108 chose this response
- Evening - 5:00 p.m. - 10:00 p.m.
  - Winter/Spring: 161 chose this response
  - Summer: 146 chose this response
  - Fall: 164 chose this response

Based on the results from the questionnaire, we see a huge interest in having classes in the evening slot (5:00pm - 10:00pm) for all seasons. The morning time slot (8:00am - 12:00pm) followed with most selected and then the afternoon slot (12:00pm - 5:00pm). With regard to seasonality, summer was the leading choice followed by winter/spring and then fall. Some respondents noted that day of the week is of consideration with program participation.

For example, for most during the school year of fall and winter/spring, during the week in the evening would work best but on the weekends during those seasons, the weekends they would prefer to be in the mornings.

Please Rank the factors below in order of importance for you when choosing a program. (With 6 being the most important, and 1 being the least important, using numbers 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, and 6 only once).

- 96.6% of the respondents answered this question
- Program content
  - 1: 15 chose this response
  - 2: 0 chose this response
  - 3: 8 chose this response
  - 4: 26 chose this response
  - 5: 30 chose this response
  - 6: 147 chose this response
- Program day
  - 1: 17 chose this response
  - 2: 17 chose this response
  - 3: 34 chose this response
  - 4: 39 chose this response
  - 5: 52 chose this response
  - 6: 60 chose this response
- Program time
  - 1: 11 chose this response
  - 2: 19 chose this response
  - 3: 31 chose this response
  - 4: 52 chose this response
  - 5: 50 chose this response
  - 6: 61 chose this response
- Program price
  - 1: 45 chose this response
  - 2: 35 chose this response
  - 3: 37 chose this response
  - 4: 29 chose this response
  - 5: 33 chose this response
  - 6: 38 chose this response
- Program proximity to you home
  - 1: 16 chose this response
  - 2: 34 chose this response
  - 3: 41 chose this response
  - 4: 43 chose this response
  - 5: 42 chose this response
  - 6: 41 chose this response
- Program transportation
  - 1: 79 chose this response

- 2: 24 chose this response
- 3: 29 chose this response
- 4: 18 chose this response
- 5: 32 chose this response
- 6: 38 chose this response

By far program content is the most important factor in this question. Respondents placed huge importance on program content compared to any other program factor. Surprisingly, the second most selected choice was 1 for program transportation, 79 chose this response for being least important when choosing a program. In addition, respondents still placed a small importance on program day and time. Meanwhile the program price and proximity to your home were not of huge significance to the respondents.

Transportation

Which pick-up / drop off locations do you use / plan to use? (Check all that apply)

- 89.8% respondents answered this question
  - 211/235 responses
- SEASPAR Office, Downers Grove: 58.8% (124 chose this response)
- Centennial Community Center, Lemont: 10% (21 chose this response)
- Denning Park, La Grange: 35.5% (75 chose this response)
- Darien Sportsplex, Darien 21.3% (45 chose this response)
- Lisle Recreation Center, Lisle: 26.1% (55 chose this response)

Some were unaware about certain pick-up/drop-off locations, specifically Lemont. Other requests included creating pick-up/drop-off locations in Westmont Park District and Grand Avenue School in Western Springs. We recommend considering expanding to more pick-up/drop-off locations with the more popular programs.

How much time are you willing to travel to a transportation/program pick-up/drop-off location?

- 99.15% respondents answered this question
  - 233/235 responses
- 5-10 minutes: 24% (56 chose this response)
- 11-20 minutes: 49.8% (116 chose this response)
- 21-30 minutes: 30.5% (71 chose this response)
- Over 30 minutes: 8.6% (20 chose this response)

Participants who are willing to travel between 5- and 30-minutes transportation/program pick-up/drop-off locations are nearly the entire survey question results. Traveling over 30 minutes is very unlikely for many participants.

SEASPAR Improvements

Overall, how satisfied are you with your overall experience with SEASPAR? (Choose the box that best represents your response using 4 - Very Satisfied, 3 - Satisfied, 2 - Somewhat Dissatisfied, and 1 - Very Dissatisfied).

- 100.0% of respondents responded to this question 235/235
- Very Satisfied: 64.7% (152 chose this response)
- Satisfied: 29.8% (70 chose this response)
- Somewhat dissatisfied: 5.5% (13 chose this response)
- Very Dissatisfied: 1.7% (4 chose this response)

Less than 8% of the responses for the questionnaire are neither, somewhat dissatisfied, or very dissatisfied. From this information SEASPAR should consider exploring both, why respondents had either a satisfied or dissatisfied experience. All feedback would be recommended to explore.

What suggestions do you have to improve SEASPAR's programs and services?

- Opened responses in the questionnaire question
  - 97 responses to this question
  - 41.28% response rate

The suggestions from the questionnaire that were of most interest/popularity were chosen. One of the suggestions included having a larger selection of sports. Specifically, when having sports programs to have some of the sports based on skill level such as basketball. Some who particularly cannot play in a game would like to shoot around and vice versa. As well as, having activities based on specially-abled-ability levels for participants who have difficulty with physical activities. Another suggestion was having more transportation options. Specifically having more locations when it came to pick-up/drop-off locations. Many suggestions discussed having a shorter winter break. They would like to see an increase in the number of zoom and virtual events during that time of the year. Other respondents

discussed having more in-depth staff training for different ability levels. Lastly, having healthier food options for participants and other options for participants with dietary restrictions.

How could SEASPAR reach other families or individuals who could use our services?

- Opened responses in questionnaire question
- 65 responses for this question
- 27.66% response rate

Respondents discussed that SEASPAR should be getting involved with local junior high schools and local high schools. Specifically, more advertising by giving flyers to local schools, stores, libraries, etc. Other advertising that respondents brought up was being involved with radio advertisements. Lastly, respondents discussed being more active on social media. We recommend that getting involved with the local school districts would be best. The local school districts that could be connected to SEASPAR should be known by all schools.

Do you have any other comments about your experience with SEASPAR? (Please note that your comments may be used or reprinted in future SEASPAR publications)

- Opened responses in questionnaire question
- 80 responses for this question
- 33.76% response rate

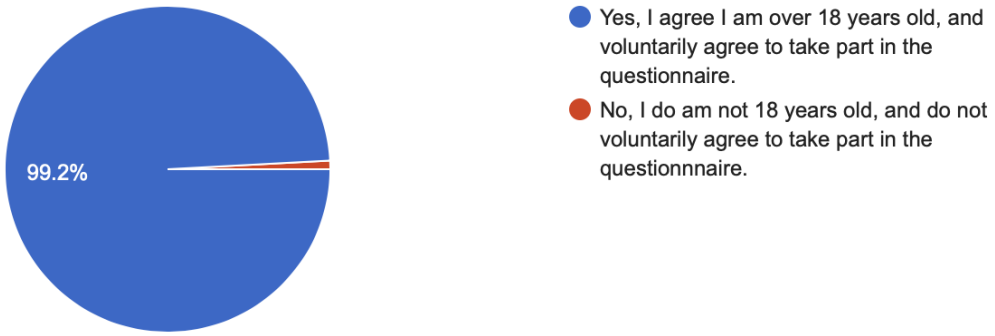
A majority of the respondents' comments were positive, and the staff and programs received a lot of praise. Many respondents loved the Eagles program and appreciate the wide variety of programs and activities that SEASPAR offers. There were a couple of comments addressing concerns with the swim lessons and prices of the programs, but other than that it was mostly positive.

Appendix A: Baseline Results

(Base results from each question. include at least 5 graphs)

Are you 18 years of age or older?

Responses

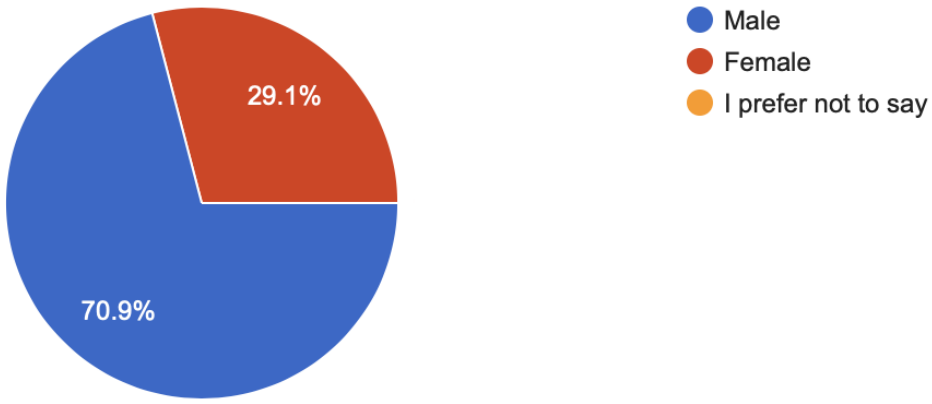


In which community does the SEASPAR participant reside?

Responses

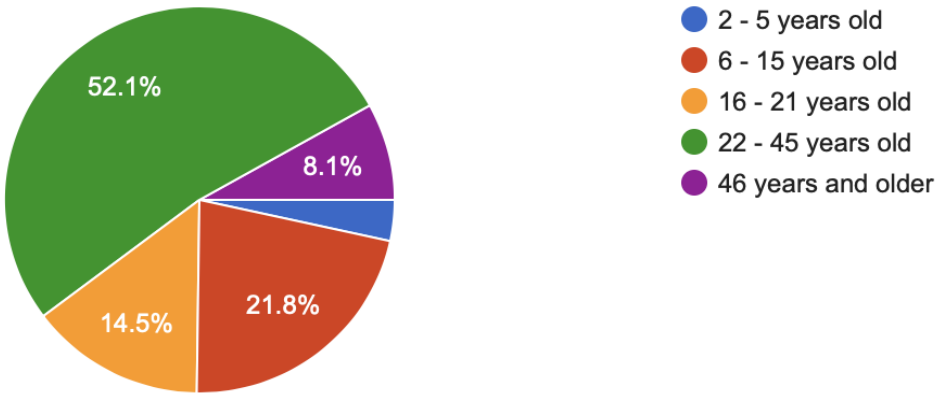
What sex is the SEASPAR Participant

Responses



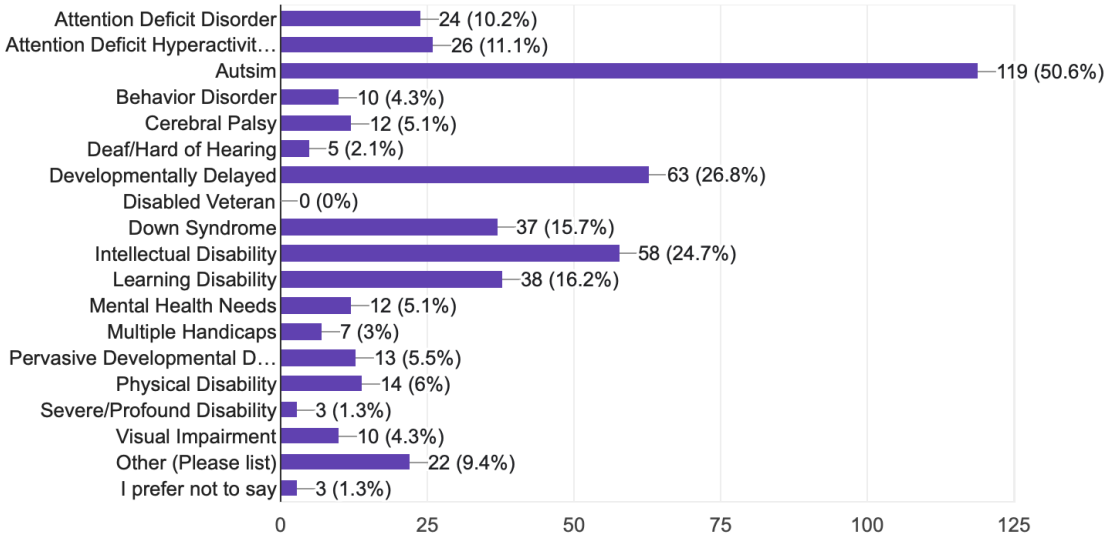
What is the SEASPAR participant's age?

Responses



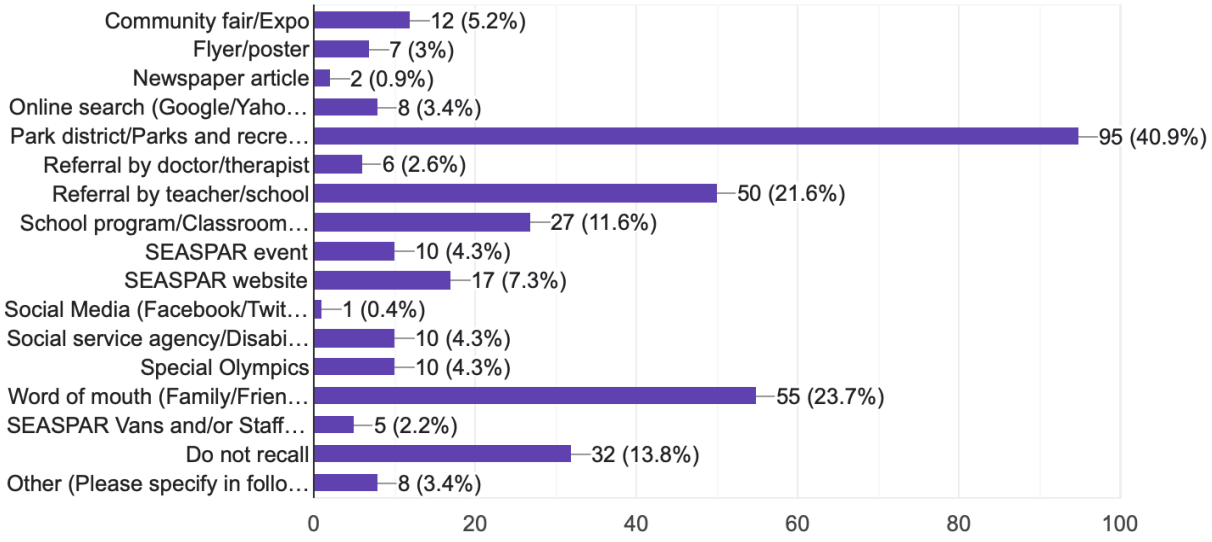
What is/are the participant's disability/disabilities? (Check all that apply)

Responses



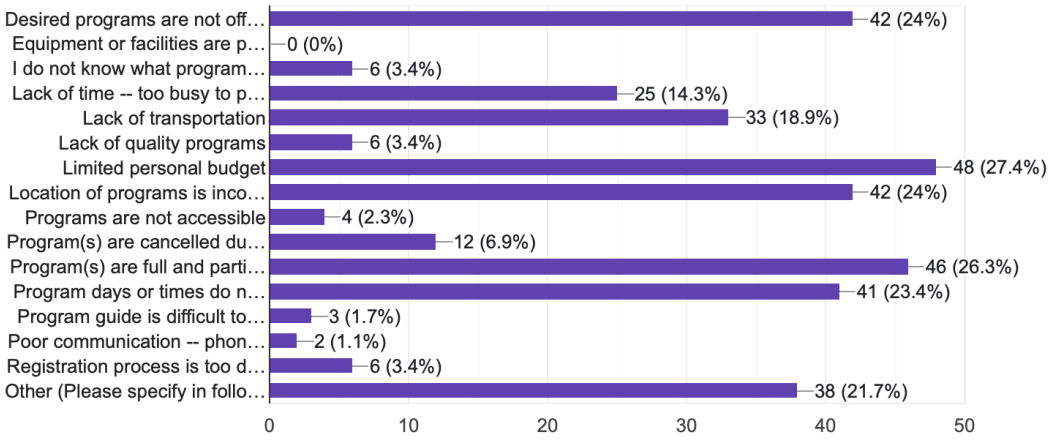
How did you hear about/become aware of SEASPAR? (Check all that apply)

Response

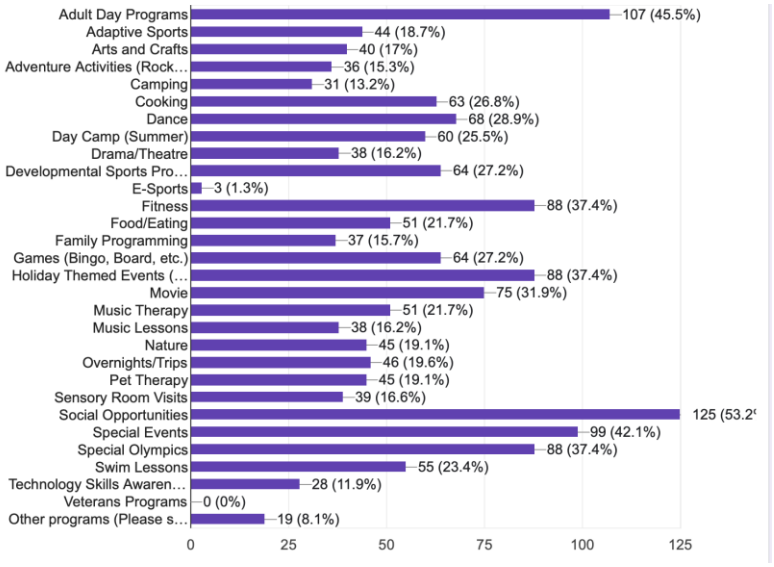


Please identify any barriers that affect SEASPAR program participation. (Check all that apply)

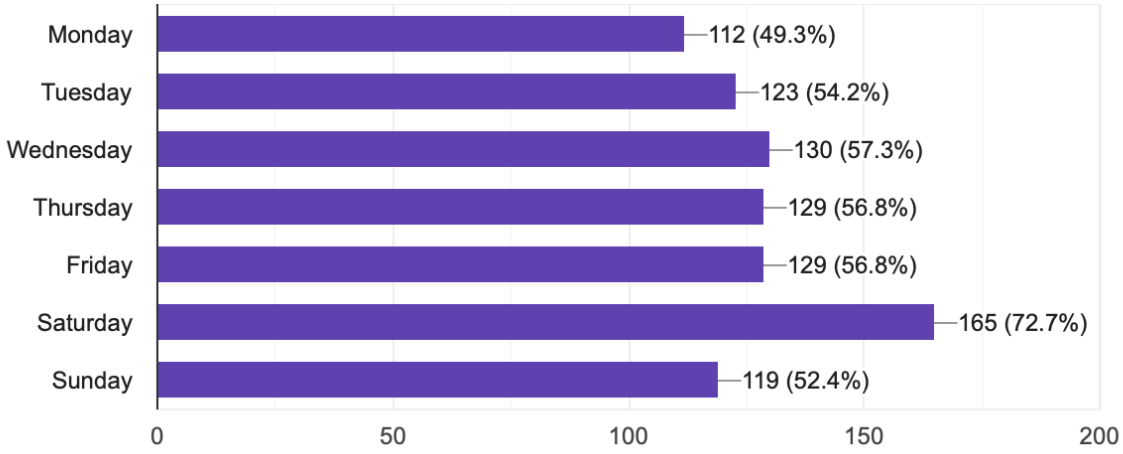
Responses



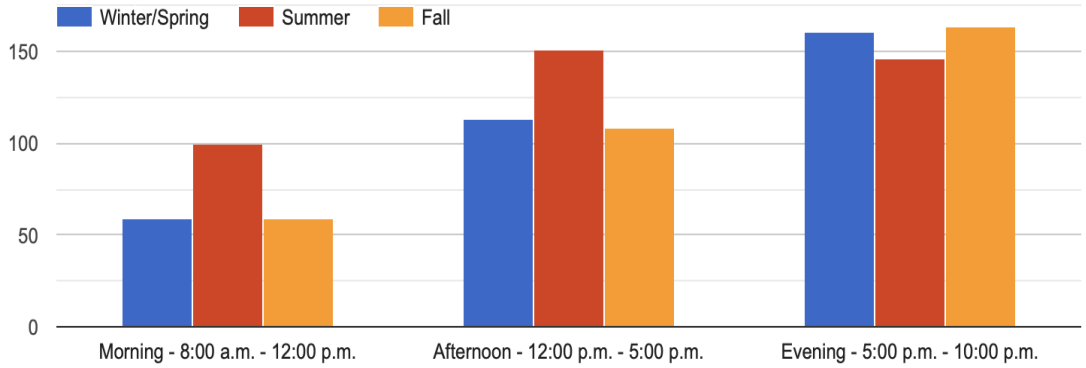
From the following list, please choose the programs in which you have interest (Check all that apply)



Which day of the week is most convenient to participate in a SEASPAR program? (Check all that apply)

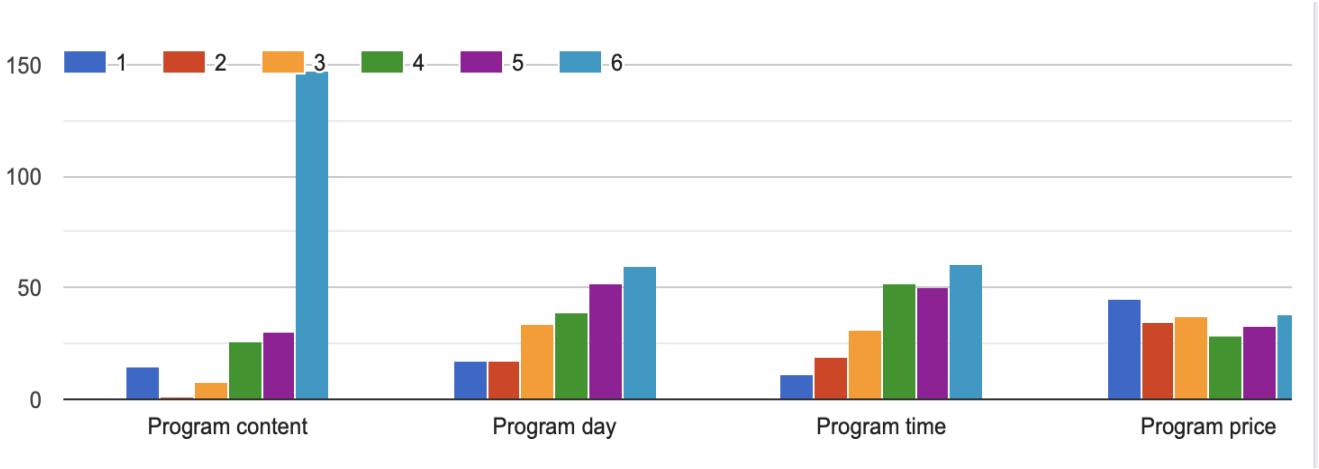


Which time of day is most convenient to participate in a SEASPAR program? (Check all that apply)



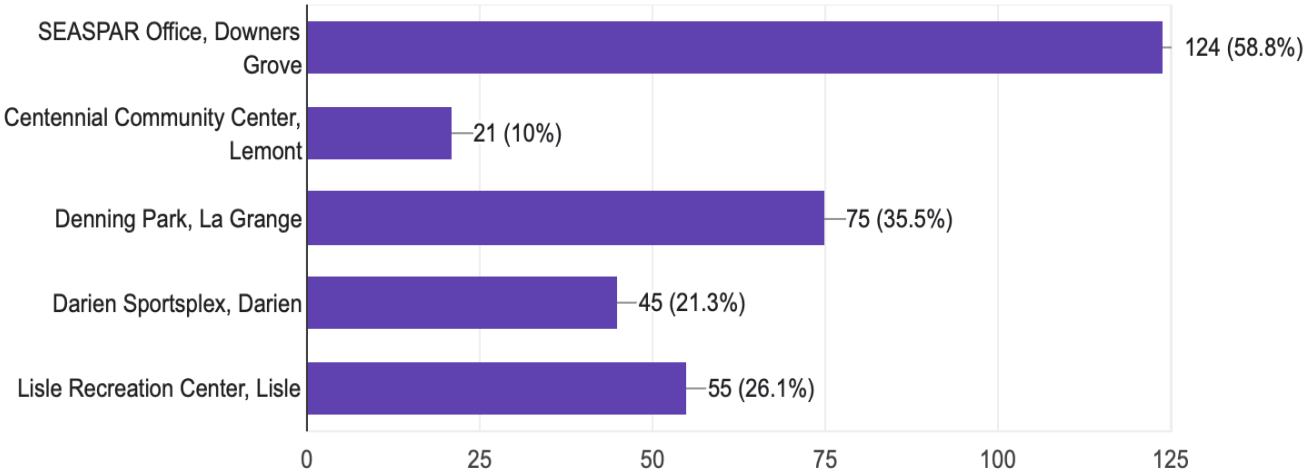
Please rank the factors below in order of importance for you when choosing a program. (With 6 being the most important, and 1 being the least important, using numbers 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, and 6 only once).

Responses



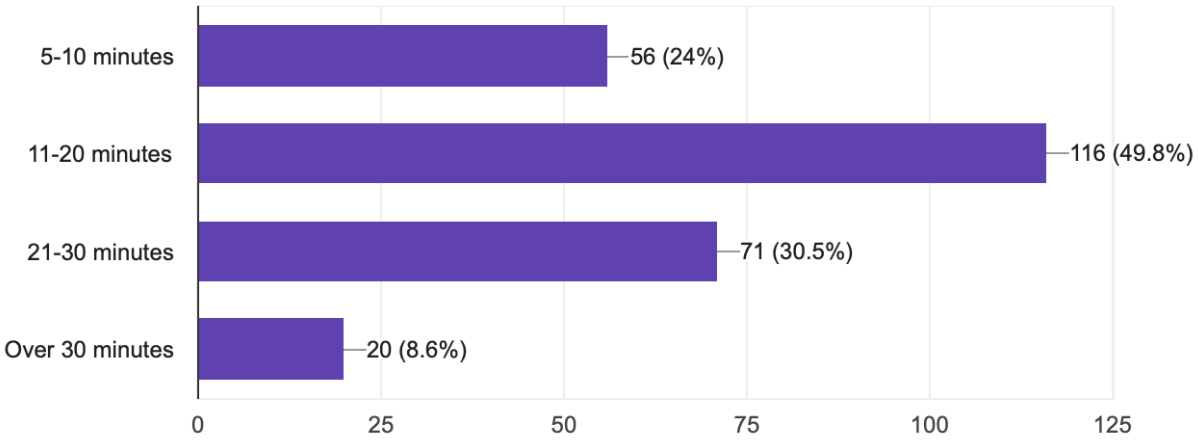
Which pick-up/drop off locations do you use/plan to use? (Choose all that apply)

Responses



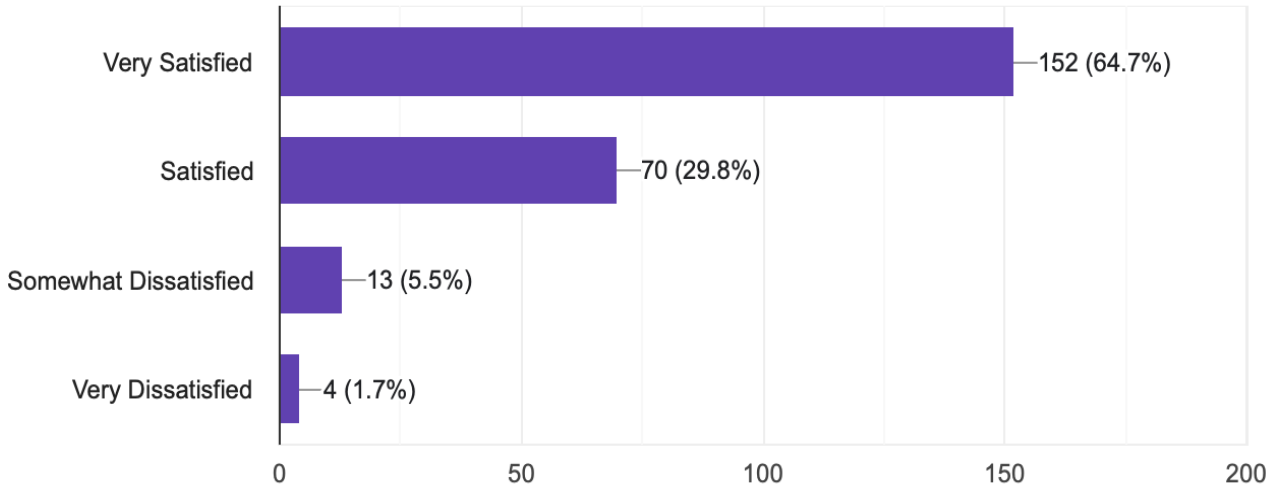
How much time are you willing to travel to a transportation/program pick-up/drop-off location?

Responses



Overall, how satisfied are you with your overall experience with SEASPAR? (Choose the box that best represents your response using 4 - Very Satisfied, 3 - Satisfied, 2 - Somewhat Dissatisfied, and 1 - Very Dissatisfied).

Responses



Appendix B: Questionnaire Open Ended Comments (categorized)

Are there other things you consider that affect your participation in a program? (Please explain)

- Work schedule
- Travel time
- Participant's engagement
- Age and ability level of participants

What suggestions do you have to improve SEASPAR's programs and services? (Please explain)

- More activities based upon participant skill level
- Improving transportation to the facilities
- Limited selection for athletic/recreational programs for those under 13 years old
- Specific staff training

How could SEASPAR reach other families or individuals who could use our services? (Please explain)

- Flyers and posters at schools and local libraries
- More advertisements throughout local communities: schools, churches, etc.
- Increase social media output
- Work with social service agencies

Do you have any other comments about your experience with SEASPAR? (Please note that your comments may be used or reprinted in future SEASPAR publications).

- Loved the programing and the staff
- Great organization
- Eagles program received high praise
- Improve summer programs

- Consider payment capacity for some families

The majority of the respondents from the questionnaire indicated that the respondents that the primary issue that they see with SEASPAR is transportation. Respondents claimed that transportation is sometimes the one and only issue in regards with attending programs and events. Reasons for this may include the transporter's work schedule throughout the day as well as distance from a specific program location. The increase of advertisement received a large response rate. To increase advertisement locally, online, and as a whole to help reach new families and communities. The program and its staff received a large amount of positive comments, particularly the Eagles program. Respondents had minimal complaints and those include improving the summer programs as well as considering payment capacity for some families. Overall, respondents had high praise for SEASPAR, its programs, and its staff.

Appendix C: Questionnaire Instrument

1. In which community does the SEASPAR participant reside?
□ **Brookfield**
□ **Clarendon Hills**
□ **Darien**
□ **Downers Grove**
□ **Indian Head Park**
□ **Lemont**
□ **La Grange**
□ **La Grange Park**
□ **Lisle**
□ **Western Springs**
□ **Westmont**
□ **Woodridge**
□ **Other (Please Write in)**

_____

2. What sex is the SEASPAR participant?
□ **Male**
□ **Female**
□ **I prefer not to say**

3. What is the SEASPAR program participant's age?
□ **2 - 5 years old**
□ **6 - 15 years old**
□ **16 - 21 years old**
□ **22 - 45 years old**
□ **46 years and older**

4. What is/are the participant's disability/disabilities? (Check all that apply)
□ **Attention Deficit Disorder**
□ **Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder**
□ **Autism**
□ **Behavior Disorder**
□ **Cerebral Palsy**
□ **Deaf/Hard of Hearing**
□ **Developmentally Delayed**
□ **Disabled Veteran**
□ **Down Syndrome**
□ **Intellectual Disability**

□ **Learning Disability**
□ **Mental Health Needs**
□ **Multiple Handicaps**
□ **Pervasive Developmental Delay**
□ **Physical Disability**
□ **Severe/Profound Disability**
□ **Visual Impairment**
□ **I prefer not to say**
□ **Other (Please list)**

_____

5. How did you hear about or become aware of SEASPAR? (Check all that apply)
□ **Community fair/Expo**
□ **Flyer/poster**
□ **Newspaper article**
□ **Online search (Google/Yahoo, etc.)**
□ **Park district/Parks and recreation department**
□ **Referral by doctor/therapist**
□ **Referral by teacher/school**
□ **School program/Classroom visit**
□ **SEASPAR event**
□ **SEASPAR website**
□ **Social Media (Facebook/Twitter/Instagram/Flickr/You Tube)**
□ **Social service agency/Disability support group**
□ **Special Olympics**
□ **Word of mouth (Family/Friend/Neighbor)**
□ **SEASPAR Vans and/or Staff at a Community Outing**
□ **Do not recall**
□ **Other (Please List)**

_____

6. From the following list, please choose the programs in which you have interest. (Check all that apply)
□ **Adult Day Programs**
□ **Adaptive Sports**
□ **Arts and Crafts**
□ **Adventure Activities (Rock Climbing, Kayaking, etc.)**
□ **Camping**
□ **Cooking**
□ **Dance**

□ **Day Camp (Summer)**
□ **Drama/Theatre**
□ **Developmental Sports Programs**
□ **E-Sports**
□ **Fitness**
□ **Food/Eating**
□ **Family Programming**
□ **Games (Bingo, Board, etc.)**
□ **Holiday Themed Events (Craft, Dance, etc.)**
□ **Movie**
□ **Music Therapy**
□ **Music Lessons**
□ **Nature**
□ **Overnights/Trips**
□ **Pet Therapy**
□ **Sensory Room Visits**
□ **Social Opportunities**
□ **Special Events**
□ **Special Olympics**
□ **Swim Lessons**
□ **Technology Skills Awareness/Development**
□ **Veterans programs**
□ **Other programs (Please specify)**

_____
_____
_____
_____

7. Please identify any barriers that affect SEASPAR program participation. (Check all that apply)
□ **Desired programs are not offered**
□ **Equipment or facilities are poorly maintained**
□ **I do not know what programs are being offered**
□ **Lack of time – too busy to participate**
□ **Lack of transportation**
□ **Lack of quality programs**
□ **Limited personal budget**
□ **Location of programs is inconvenient**
□ **Programs are not accessible**
□ **Program(s) are canceled due to low enrollment**
□ **Program(s) are full and participant is placed on waitlist**

□ Program days or times do not work with my schedule
□ Program guide is difficult to understand
□ Poor communication – phone calls/emails are not returned in a timely manner
□ Poor customer service experience/Staff issue
□ Registration process is too difficult
□ Other (Please specify)
_____

8. Which day of the week is most convenient to participate in a SEASPAR program? (Check all that apply)
□ Monday
□ Tuesday
□ Wednesday
□ Thursday
□ Friday
□ Saturday
□ Sunday

9. Which time of day is most convenient to participate in an SEASPAR program? (Check all that apply)
Time of Day/Season Winter/Spring Summer Fall
□ Morning - 8:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.
□ Afternoon - 12:00 p.m. – 5:00 p.m.
□ Evening - 5:00 p.m. – 10:00 p.m.

10. Please rank the factors below in order of importance for you when choosing a program. (With 6 being the most important, and 1 being the least important, using numbers 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, and 6 only once).
___ Program content
___ Program day
___ Program time
___ Program price
___ Program proximity to your home
___ Program transportation

11. Are there other things you consider that affect your participation in a program? (Please explain)

_____

_____

_____

12. Which pick-up/drop off locations do you use/plan to use? (Choose all that apply)

□ **SEASPAR Office, Downers Grove**
□ **Centennial Community Center, Lemont**
□ **Denning Park, La Grange**
□ **Darien Sportsplex, Darien**
□ **Lisle Recreation Center, Lisle**

13. Do you have any other suggested pick-up/drop-off locations? (Please list)

_____

_____

_____

14. How much time are you willing to travel to a transportation/program pick-up/drop-off location?

□ **5-10 minutes**
□ **11-20 minutes**
□ **21-30 minutes**
□ **Over 30 minutes**

15. Overall, how satisfied are you with your overall experience with SEASPAR? (Choose the box that best represents your response using 4 - Very Satisfied, 3 - Satisfied, 2 - Somewhat Dissatisfied, and 1 - Very Dissatisfied).

□ **Very Satisfied**
□ **Satisfied**
□ **Somewhat Dissatisfied**
□ **Very Dissatisfied**

16. What suggestions do you have to improve SEASPAR's programs and services?
(Please explain)

_____
_____
_____

17. How could SEASPAR reach other families or individuals who could use our services? (Please explain)

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

18. Do you have any other comments about your experience with SEASPAR? (Please note that your comments may be used or reprinted in future SEASPAR publications).

_____
_____
_____
_____

Appendix D: Cross Tabulation Results (Tables)

Questionnaire Question	# Of responses	% Answered	# Of non-responses	Evaluation of Results (Majority Results)
Are You 18 years of age or older?	237	100%	0	Yes
In Which community does the participant reside?	235	99.16%	2	Downers Grove
What sex is the SEASPAR participant	234	98.73%	3	Male
What is the SEASPAR program participant's age?	234	98.73%	3	22-45 years old
What is/are the participant's disability/disabilities?	235	99.16%	2	Autism
How did you hear about or become aware of SEASPAR?	232	97.89%	5	Park District/Parks and Recreation department
From the following list, please choose the programs in which you have interest (Check all that apply)	235	99.16%	2	Social Opportunities
Please identify any barriers that affect SEASPAR program participation. (Check all that apply)	175	73.84%	62	Limited Personal Budget
Which day of the week is most convenient to participate in a SEASPAR program?	227	95.78%	10	Saturday
Which time of day is most convenient to participate in a SEASPAR program? (Check all that apply)	60	25.53%	177	Winter/Spring: Evening, Summer: Afternoon, Fall: Evening
Please rank the factors below in order of importance for you when choosing a program. (With 6 being	227	96.60%	10	Program Content

the most important, and 1 being the least important, using numbers 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, and 6 only once).				
Are there other things you consider that affect your participation in a program? (Please explain)	43	18.14%	194	Comments about participants' schedules
Which pick-up/drop off locations do you use/plan to use? (Choose all that apply)	211	89.03%	26	Downers Grove
Do you have any other suggested pick-up/drop-off locations? (Please list)	25	10.55%	212	Western Springs
How much time are you willing to travel to a transportation/program pick-up/drop-off location?	233	98.31%	5	11-20 minutes
Overall, how satisfied are you with your overall experience with SEASPAR? (Choose the box that best represents your response using 4 - Very Satisfied, 3 - Satisfied, 2 - Somewhat Dissatisfied, and 1 - Very Dissatisfied).	235	99.16%	2	Very Satisfied
What suggestions do you have to improve SEASPAR's programs and services? (Please explain)	97	40.93%	140	Wider variety of program content
How could SEASPAR reach other families or individuals who could use our services? (Please explain)	65	27.43%	172	Schools & Social Media

Do you have any other comments about your experience with SEASPAR? (Please note that your comments may be used or reprinted in future SEASPAR publications).	80	33.76%	157	Positive Feedback

Appendix E: SEASPAR Mission Video Script

According to the U.S. National Institutes of Health in 2022, there are 57.8 million people living in the U.S. with an emotional or physical specially-abled ability. This number is 18 times greater than the population of Chicago. Downers Grove, Illinois based South East Association for Special Parks And Recreation (SEASPAR), is committed to enriching the lives of those in need through recreation in twelve local communities throughout northeast Illinois. SEASPAR believes that together, we can transform the lives of our participants with our core values of fun, friendship, caring, trust and accountability. For more information about SEASPAR, please visit www.seaspar.org We thank you for your generous spirit to help those with specially-abled abilities, live an “exclusively inclusive” ™ life.

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